At Home in the Modern World

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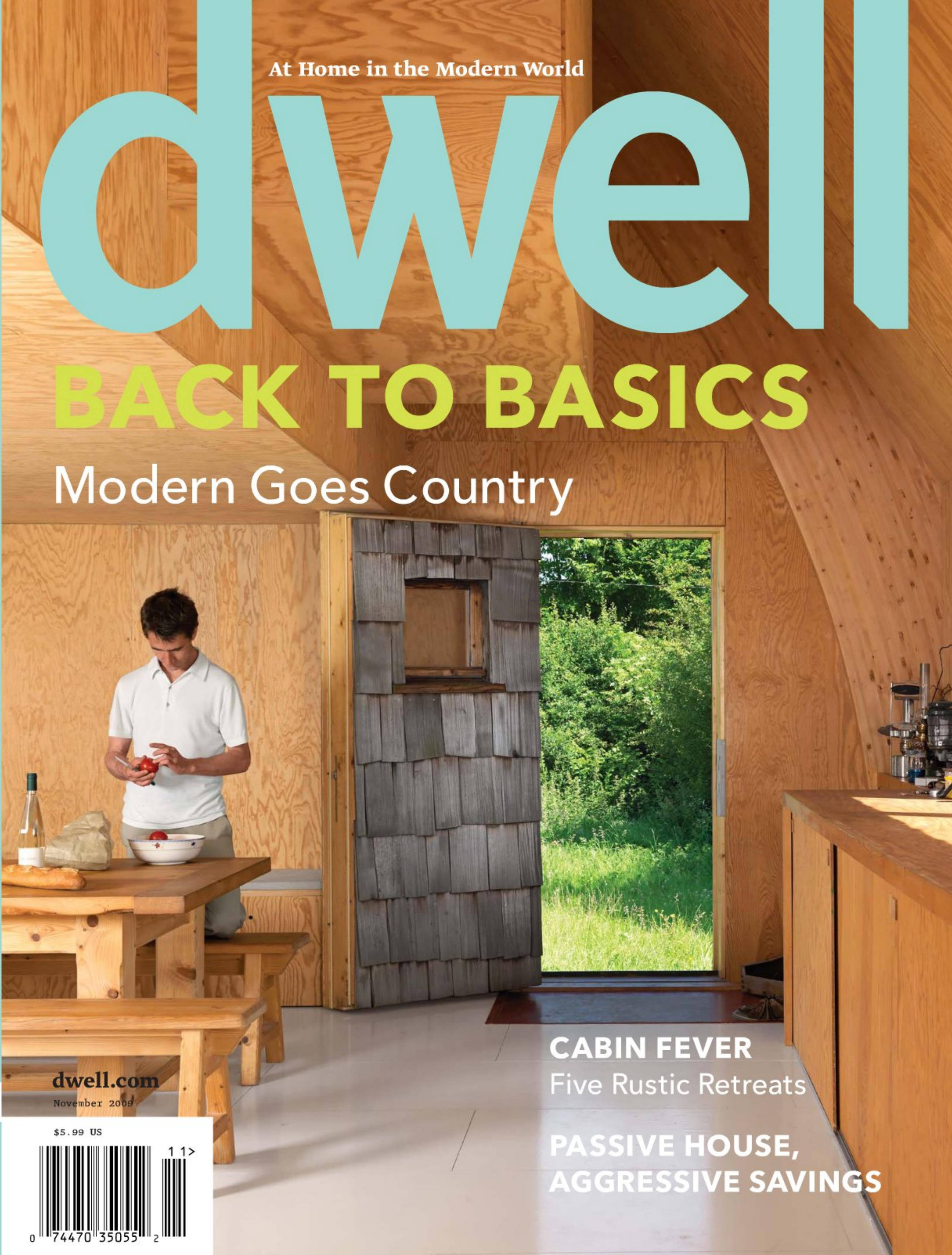
BACK TO BASICS

Modern Goes Country



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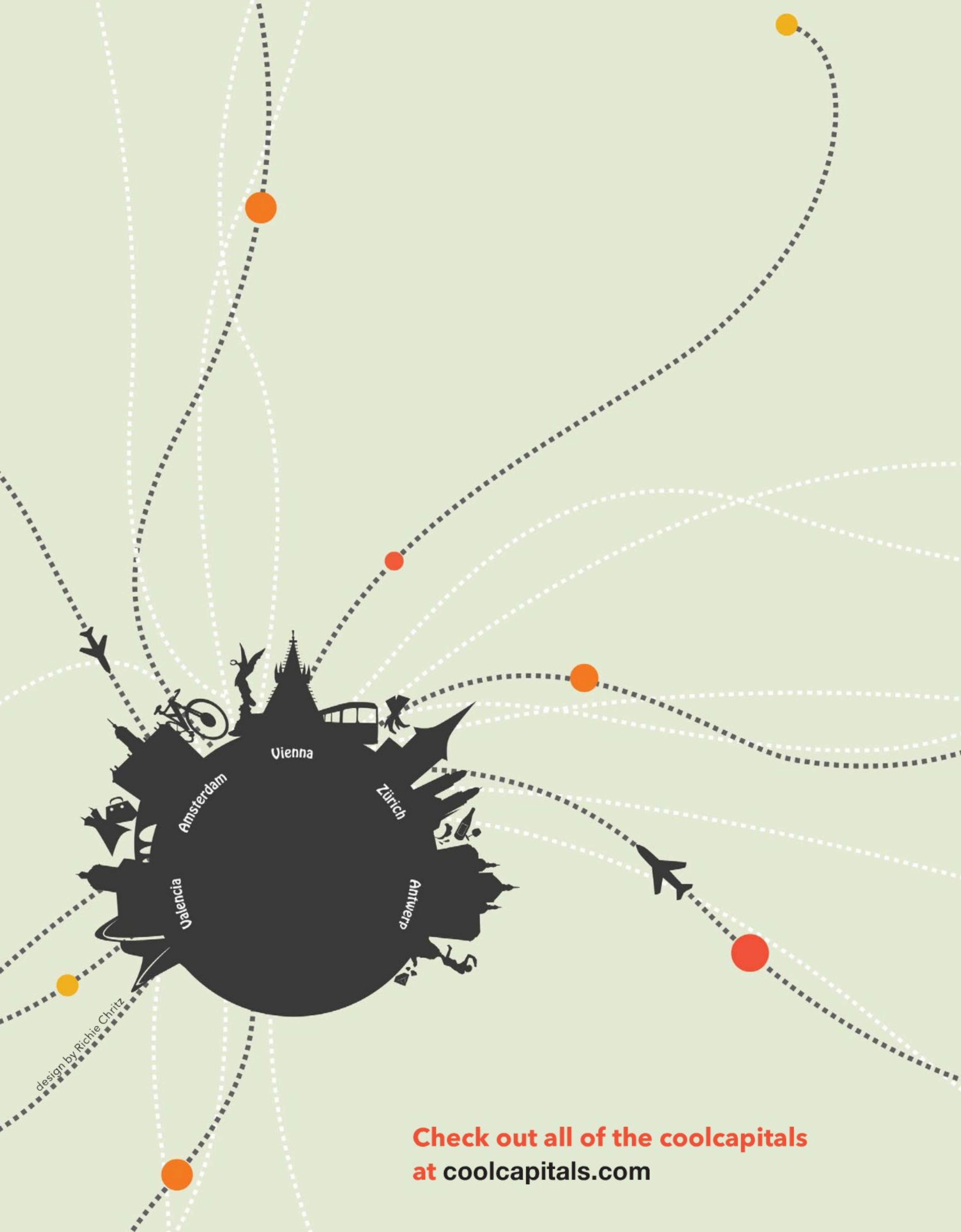

Vienna
Amsterdam
Zürich
Valencia
Antwerp
design by Richie Chritz
Check out all of the coolcapitals
at coolcapitals.com

"Destination Awesome" is named the coolest design of the Dwell and coolcapitals competition

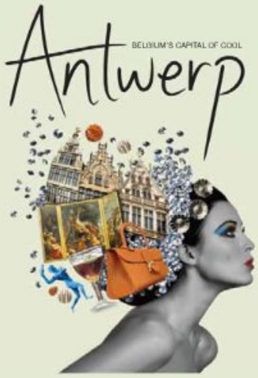
Dwell and coolcapitals.com are thrilled to announce the winner of our design competition. The competition, launched at Dwell on Design in June, solicited graphic design concepts for a messenger bag representing the unique culture, people, and sensibilities of the five coolcapitals.com cities: Amsterdam, Antwerp, Valencia, Vienna, and Zürich.

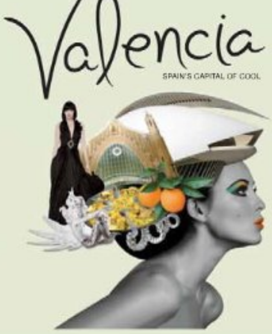
The winning design, "Destination Awesome" by Los Angeles–based designer **Richie Chritz** features a clever concept fusing iconic architecture and cultural landmarks representative of the five coolcapitals. The design will appear on a stylish messenger bag that will be distributed at several Dwell design events. To find out more about how you can attend an event and get a coolcapitals bag of your own go to **dwell.com/coolcapitals**.

The designer comments, "Thinking about representing multiple cities in a graphic way, I immediately envisioned a map...I settled on showing planes in motion, with dots representing coordinates—the suggestion and the experience of movement."

As part of the grand prize, Chritz and a guest will receive two round-trip tickets to Amsterdam—his coolcapital of choice. They'll also receive a five-night hotel stay, two Amsterdam city cards covering transportation within the area, and entry to numerous museums and attractions.

The expert panel that selected the winning design included Kyle Blue, Dwell's design director, Brendan Callahan, Dwell's senior designer, Ashley Schönknecht, Dwell's marketing designer, as well as the representatives of coolcapitals.





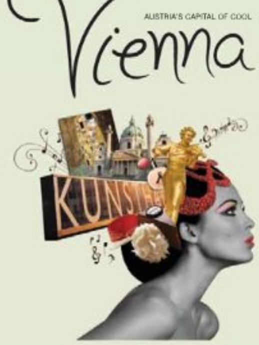


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Photo by Céline Clanet

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Physically, philosophically, it is impossible to fully assess the HS Hybrid using only an antiquated measuring stick, like horsepower. Indeed, there is a new kind of power in the HS, and it's not just confined to the engine.

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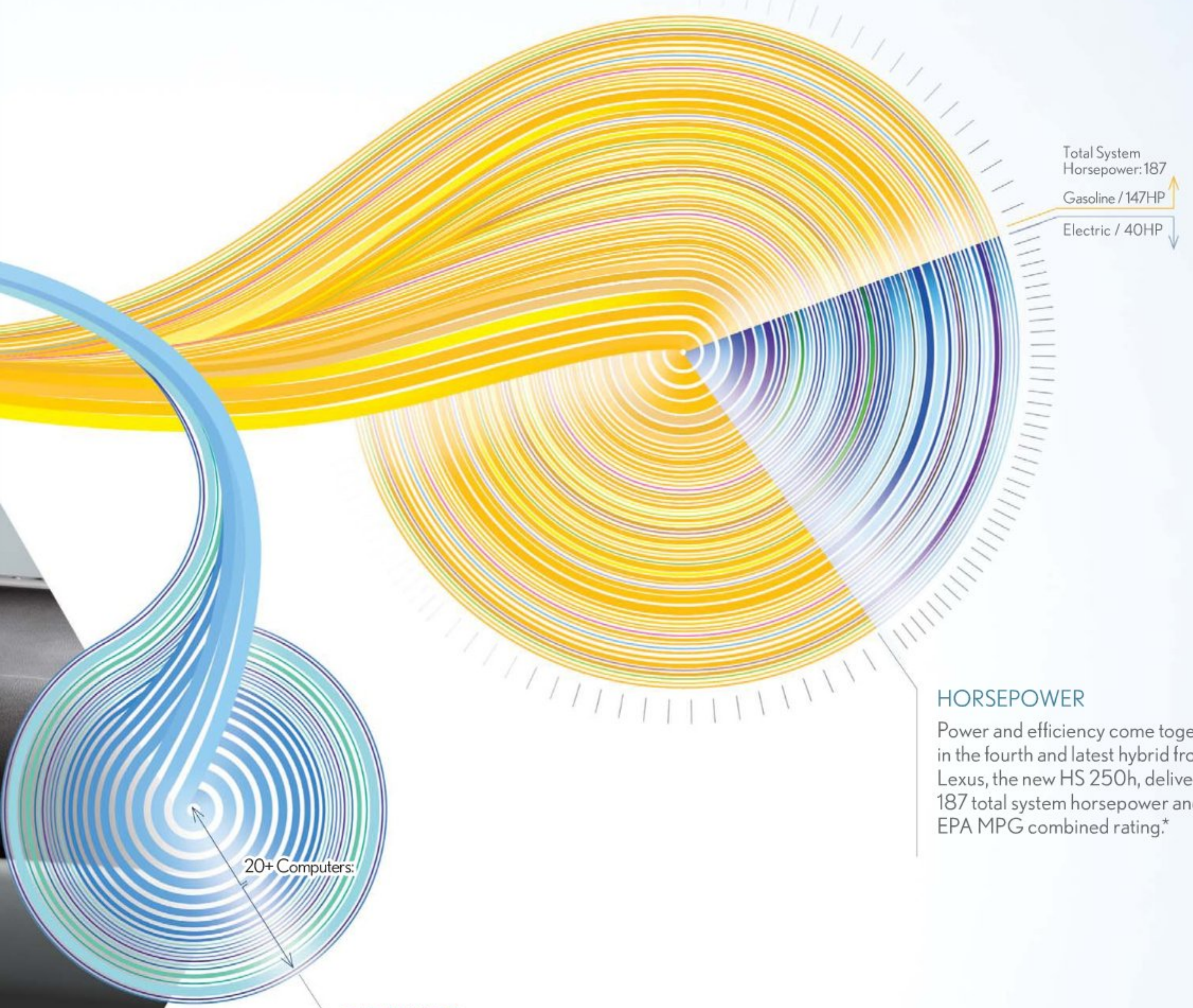

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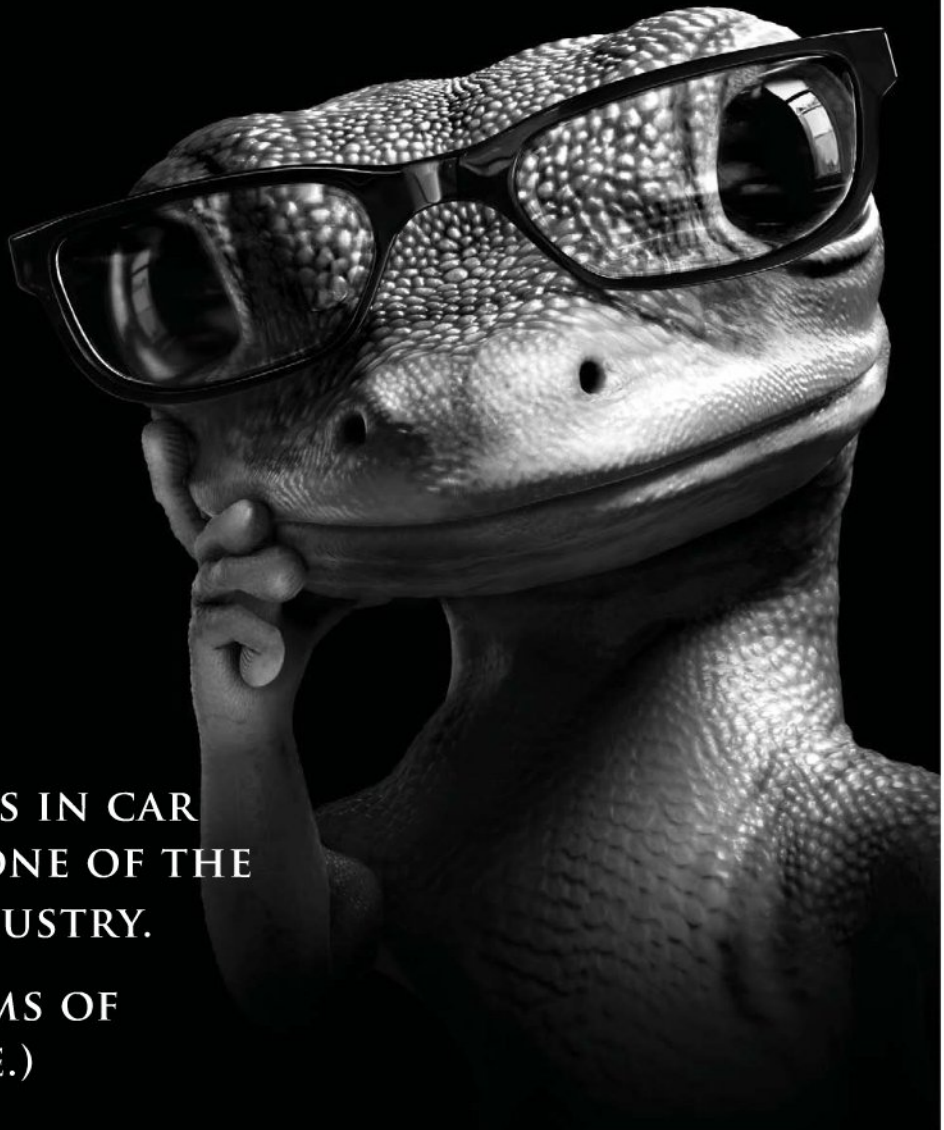

A NOTE ON 70 YEARS IN CAR INSURANCE FROM ONE OF THE GIANTS IN THE INDUSTRY.

(WELL, NOT IN TERMS OF HEIGHT, OF COURSE.)

What the Gecko lacks in stature he certainly makes up for in ability. In fact, under the ownership of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Inc., he's helped GEICO rise to become the nation's third-largest car insurance company. Of course, the fact that GEICO has been helping people save money on car insurance for over 70 years hasn't hurt either. And when it comes to financial security, GEICO is consistently ranked "excellent" or better by independent experts. But even though it's not common practice to have geckos in the highest levels of business, this one inspired three million drivers to switch to GEICO last year (and never missed a day of work). Perhaps proving that you can be both big and small at the same time.

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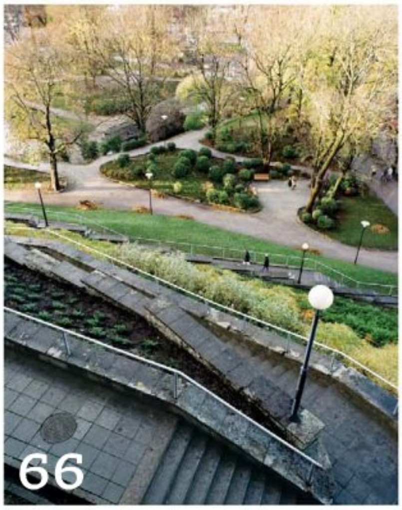
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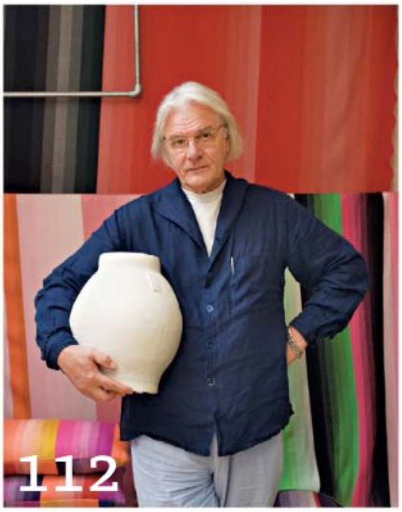
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> "My memories of the countryside are of houses that are cold in winter and in the summer, hot. It's not unpleasant to actually experience the seasons."
>
> Jean-Baptiste Barache

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Up on the Farm

Point your cursor to any corner of the Internet specializing in speculations on the future of architecture and design, and you will likely stumble upon hoards of highly developed and intricately rendered schemes for "vertical farming." Not unlike the way in which tart frozen yogurt, cupcakes, pork belly, and mobile eateries have all become unlikely culinary phenomena, vertical farms appear to have usurped the collective consciousness of imaginative designers everywhere. Leaving aside the questions of who would own and be responsible for the things, they're an attractive solution to a number of issues—food supply and demand, sustainable farming practices, water and energy consumption, and shipping costs among them. As more of us find ourselves living in metropolises, where our food will come from and who will produce it become ever more pressing questions. These vertical farms—multistory urban sites with crops and vegetables growing in greenhouselike conditions in their upper levels and livestock and fish thriving below—could conceivably alleviate many of those issues. But in reality, high-rises stocked with Swiss chard, soybeans, and Oven Stuffer Roasters are still closer to science fiction than science fact.

Though today's vertical farms may well go the way of yesterday's walking cities, there are a number of promising developments that point to a symbiosis of urbanism and agriculture. Look no further than New York City, of all places. There you'll find what is perhaps the most exciting and improbable design achievement of the last decade: the High Line, a decommissioned elevated railway on Manhattan's West Side that was transformed into a public park. Still in its first season, the High Line has been an overwhelming success, attracting city dwellers and tourists—even spurring on a minor architectural revolution at its edges. (Frank Gehry, James Polshek, and Neil Denari have all completed projects adjacent to the High Line, and more are in the works from the likes of Jean Nouvel and Shigeru Ban.) While the park doesn't yet contain vegetable gardens or chicken coops, its success reveals that there's a huge appetite for this kind of transformation and that, with some creativity, there is always a bit more space for nature even in a densely packed city.

A little way up the Hudson, floating next to a pier in Yonkers, New York, you'll find the Science Barge, a prototype for a sustainable farm and education center, and probably the closest thing we have yet to a vertical farm. Powered by photovoltaics, the barge's hydroponic greenhouses grow tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce without net carbon emissions, pesticides, or runoff. At an achievable scale (think rooftops), it's a promising model for how urban farms could operate.

Examples such as these demonstrate how what has traditionally been the domain of the countryside is infiltrating the city—and the city in turn can have positive effects on rural areas. Organizations like New York's Just Food are establishing community-supported agriculture by matching farmers with neighborhood groups. In the winter, the farmer sells shares in his upcoming harvest, and during the spring, summer, and fall, shareholders reap the benefits with weekly deliveries of fresh vegetables from that farm. It's an easily expandable system with clear benefits for all parties involved.

Right now, these instances may seem the odd exceptions; it's clear, however, that for both our cities and countrysides to continue to function en masse, the lines between what was once urban and once rural must become increasingly blurred. In this issue, we look at the role design is already playing in that intersection, though the most exciting developments may be yet to come. I look forward to the day when a prestigious firm's client list includes not only developers and philanthropists but also goats, chickens, and bees.

Sam Grawe, Editor-in-Chief
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Dwell magazine congratulates designer Philippe Starck and the yoo by Starck team for articulating this unique definition of home created exclusively for uncompromising urban dwellers.

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I always enjoy the Editor's Note, which gets my magazine reading off on the right foot each issue. The healthy mix of intelligent and witty commentary is the perfect introduction to the theme. The September 2009 letter ("The Wright Stuff") was so relatable that I couldn't resist adding a few notes of my own.

Growing up the daughter of two landscape architects and the granddaughter of an architect, architectural literacy wasn't optional for me. To be an active part of the family, I needed to speak the language, and it was the works of Frank Lloyd Wright that taught it to me. Wright has always been a favorite of my parents, and I started visiting his buildings on family vacations at the tender age of four. Designating our holiday time for Wrightian road trips didn't wow my peers—and there was a time when I probably would have chosen Disneyland over Taliesin—but those thoughts were fast and fleeting. Wright became the benchmark for my own design aesthetic, and I happily accepted it and grew to appreciate it differently with age and experience.

Now, as a student of landscape architecture (I tried to stray into journalism, but the profession is inbred and I was pulled back in), I look back to Wright to direct my work. This ongoing search for inspiration is why I chose Copenhagen, Denmark, for my semester abroad this past spring. The city's pedestrian scale and love of bicycles was enough to draw me in, but the force of Scandinavian design sanctioned my choice. I arrived early on the first of January, jetlagged and bleary-eyed, and was dropped off with luggage far heavier than myself. After I paid the cab driver and managed to get my knapsack onto my back without falling over, I looked up in the early morning light for my first view of my new home: the Mountain Dwellings. This colossal, shiny, angular building towered over me as I stood in awe of my luck at being able to call this home for the next six months.

Unfortunately, in all of my cross-Atlantic and post–New Year's Eve confusion, I had misread the address, and I actually ended up living in a standard student residence across the street. My disappointment was overshadowed by the excitement of living in Denmark, and I did get to know the Mountain Dwellings during my neighborhood jogs. I was continually impressed by the memories of Wright that the building generated for me. The reminder of just how transcendent design can be was extremely encouraging for me. After reading the September Editor's Note, I take comfort in knowing that a gratitude for the new interpretation of Wright's thoughts is widespread.

Kate Nelischer
Guelph, Ontario

I read the article "The 3107 Chair" (September 2009) and was awed by how a chair that was designed 54 years ago can still look like it was designed yesterday. Your outlining of the process of how each Series 7 chair is manufactured made me a fan of Arne Jacobsen. A week after I read the article, I saw an ad on Craigslist for four used 3107 chairs for a steal of a price and found myself armed with the knowledge to prove that the chairs were authentic. I am now a proud owner of five—the seller found an extra chair in her garage—authentic beech-colored 3107 chairs that Fritz Hansen produced in 1998.

Monico J. Maniquiz Jr.
Granada Hills, California

What is the monorail lighting fixture hanging in David Mazza's kitchen in the September 2009 feature on the Taylor Gourmet in Washington, DC ("Hoagies' Heroes")? It's just what I have been searching for.

Lena Leichtling
Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California

Editors' Note: The fixture is the Cesium ceiling spotlight from Ikea, which retails for about $40 in the U.S.

In the September 2009 issue ("Product Design 101"), Grant Petersen recommends "infrastructure—cities and laws and support—for the bicycle and against the car." A very elegant solution exists in Munich, Germany. There, the bicycle lanes are placed between parked cars and the sidewalks, as opposed to the way it's done in the United States, by placing the bicycle lanes between parked cars and the road. This arrangement accomplishes a few things immediately, such as the riders being protected from highly distracted drivers by a barrier of parked cars.

Cars in this country are mainly used for single-occupant transportation; therefore the frequency of car doors being opened into the bike lane is low. It's a simple, elegant design solution.

Jon Ubick
Pacific Palisades, California

When my wife and I purchased our first house in 1989, it was referred to as a "starter home" because of its small size (980 square feet) and age (built in 1956). At the time, we bought into that notion, but as time progressed and we grew to know our neighbors, we really began to love our manageable little house, which was just right for three after our son was born.

We added a small family room and enclosed a carport—both of which added significant value to the house—and now our "people per square foot" ratio is as good as families with four kids in a much larger home. By living with a very budget-friendly mortgage, we've been able to buy another small home (a 1970s-era A-frame) about an hour out of town that we enjoy immensely on long weekends. Like your Think Smaller (June 2009) issue, ▸

Photo by João Canziani

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and especially in light of the current housing and economic environment, we prefer to think of our little house as a "smarter home."

Danny Hommes
St. Charles, Missouri

Being long-term, overseas subscribers, we were finally able to make it to Dwell on Design in Los Angeles this year (June 26–28, 2009). We registered for both of the home tours on Saturday and Sunday, which, of course, were great and showed the pearls that are hidden even in a beast of a city like Los Angeles. The only downside was that although we started the tours at 9:30 a.m. each day, we didn't make it to the exhibition hall and show floor until 4 p.m., leaving us with only a few hours there. I assume other visitors who wanted to enjoy both the tour and the show ran into similar situations.

Otherwise, we had two perfect Southern California days, and we will definitely come again if possible.

Carola and Ralf Röhrle
Höchstadt, Germany

Being an interior designer and renovator who specializes in window treatments, I really appreciated "At Home in the Zone" (May 2009). I found it interesting that you mentioned (twice, in fact!) the importance of choosing energy-efficient window treatments and stressed that it would be prudent to consult a window-treatment specialist. I presented a seminar just yesterday on green design and was proud to use that very article in my talk. This very important aspect of green decor is one that should be talked about more often, especially in light of all the companies that are now making the effort to be more environmentally conscious, not only in what their products are made of but also how they are manufactured. I look forward to reading (and learning) more in the future!

Nick Nixon
Elizabeth City, North Carolina

I've read Sam Grawe's Editor's Note from the April 2009 issue numerous times—from when I began a search to purchase a property, to when I moved all of my belongings out of my rental and into a 10-by-12-foot storage unit, to the numerous property tours, an offer made, and an offer rejected. The task of house hunting can be quite daunting. You were right. There was one thing that kept me determined to find a place to call home: that thread of hope.

I've now found my home, my blank canvas to fill. After purchase agreements; homeowner's, flood, and hurricane insurance (the joys of Louisiana); lending agreements; inspections;

appraisals; and closings, the mountain looks high, I'm near the top, and I can't wait to enjoy the view. "Take a deep breath; it can be done."

Your letter has given me drive for the past several months; I can't thank you enough. I tore out the letter and I am having it framed as my "Home Sweet Home" piece to hang in my new house. It truly is an inspiration.

Hunter Territo
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

A heartfelt thank you to writer Grant Gibson and the magazine as a whole for the great Prefab (February 2009) issue. As an educator trying to expose the new generation of designers to innovative and sustainable construction methods, I was excited to see the "Swiss Mix" precast-concrete home grace your pages. I was so impressed with the idea of precast residences that I contacted the home's architect, Felix Oesch. I had scheduled a spring-break trip to Europe to tour precast-concrete buildings and wanted to incorporate his architecture into it. Too often in the United States, our only exposure to precast concrete is parking structures. Oesch's designs prove that the material is sophisticated, has great design potential, and has a warmth in a very tactile sense.

I heard back from Oesch almost immediately, and not only was he interested in the idea, but Elsaesser, the concrete manufacturer, and Christof Meili, the homeowner, were too. Within a month, I had planned the the trip and my colleagues and I were touring projects and the state-of-the-art concrete-manufacturing plant and eating lunch with Oesch and Meili overlooking the Swiss countryside.

The tour and our documentation of it has proven invaluable in the studio classes, and our students produced some really well-thought-out projects with the help of the great inspirations we saw in Switzerland and that you publish in the pages of your magazine.

John DeSalvo
Illinois Institute of Technology
Chicago, Illinois

Correction: In September 2009's "Off the Grid," we incorrectly located Boston's iconic weather beacon atop the Prudential Tower instead of its true position on the Berkeley Building, formerly called the John Hancock Building. We are wicked sorry for this blunder.

Please write to us:
Dwell Letters
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San Francisco, CA 94133
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Remembering Julius Shulman

by Raymond Neutra

Photographic junkets with my father, Richard Neutra, and photographer Julius Shulman were part of my childhood. My father and his apprentices would load a few pieces of Neutra-designed furniture into the trunk of the car, along with some eucalyptus branches cut off from one of the trees on our small lot, and then we would drive off to a recently completed building. Julius would arrive in a shiny black hearselike panel van nicknamed Sylvester. While we greeted the owner, started moving their unapproved furniture out of the way, and brought my dad's furniture into the house, Julius would unload several metal boxes, floodlights, his tripod, his view camera, and his black cloth and bring them into the house. My job was to help move the furniture and place the eucalyptus branches on the bare ground where the garden was to be planted. Occasionally I was used as a model. Images of a much younger me can be found in various architectural books.

My father and Julius discussed the composition of each of these shots, and there was a great deal of subtle moving this way and that so that the design elements and landscape features were lined up just so or the branch of a tree just obscured an ugly telephone pole. When a picture had been composed and taken and the view camera moved, my father would often take Julius's place and snap the same view as a color slide through the enormous wide-angle lens of his Leica.

As I grew older, I began to notice some tension on these outings. My father was unusual among Julius's clients in that he always came along on the shoots and involved himself in the composition of each shot. By the time I was a teenager, Julius had become a famous photographer and had developed his own ideas on how best to approach his job. However, my father had a clear idea about what story he wanted the images to tell. Half a century later, Julius remembered my father's interventions as a fruitless activity that he had to tolerate. "Your father was the one who adjusted back and forth to his satisfaction," he told me recently. "Then he would move on to the next shot and I would quietly move the camera back to the composition I had seen with my eyes before I even had placed the camera." I was astounded to learn that Julius framed each composition in his mind long before ducking under the black cloth.

He recalled the particular instance of shooting the Kaufmann House in Palm Springs: "I noticed the alpine glow on the mountains to the east and looked up at the house with the silhouetted mountains to the west, behind which the sun had just set. I knew that I had a wonderful shot. I ran indoors and grabbed my camera on its tripod, slung my photography bag over my other shoulder, and hurried toward the open sliding glass door. Your father tried to grab my arm to detain me from going outside so I could continue shooting the interior, but I shook off his arm and rushed past the spot where I had realized that a great shot was in the offing and continued on another 20 feet or so, past the Van Keppel-Green lounge chairs, and, wheeling about, set down the camera and made my shot."

In recent years, I took to visiting Julius whenever I was down in Los Angeles. In 2007, I called him up to wish him a happy 97th birthday and asked him if he could spare some time the next morning to give me advice about assembling a fundraising committee of architectural aficionados to deal with a financial crisis (now resolved) related to the Richard and Dion Neutra Van der Leeuw (VDL) studios and residences designed by my father and brother on Silver Lake Boulevard in Los Angeles. Julius generously agreed to be the first member of that honorary committee.

Late in 2008, Julius again offered his help to those of us who were working to restore and endow the VDL studios and residences: He graciously agreed to authorize the production of 35 digital archival double-size prints of a photograph that he had taken in the late 1960s of my father sitting next to the rooftop reflecting pool at VDL. (These numbered prints are available to those who give leadership-level gifts to the VDL restoration campaign.) In their many years of collaboration, Julius told me, my father was usually reluctant to appear in the photographs. He didn't want the eye to be diverted from the design. In this case, sitting low and unobtrusively in the picture's composition, he relented.

My last visit to Julius was with my wife a few months before he died. He was frailer then but still full of humor. At my urging, he told us about the landslide that once occurred at his home after heavy rains. One slide trapped him in rubble at his garage but, in retrospect, saved him from being killed by a second slide that engulfed his front door. Luck and Raphael Soriano's fine engineering saved Julius so that he could serve as witness, documentarian, and advocate for modern architecture for another half century. As we left, Julius grabbed my wife's hand. "Stay beautiful!" he said. Ah, Julius, we will miss you!

neutra-vdl.org

Anyone interested in modern design owes a little gratitude to legendary photographer Julius Shulman, who passed away in July at the age of 98. Shulman's images are as iconic as the buildings they documented and represent the zeitgeist of an important chapter in design history. Dwell visited Shulman in his Raphael Soriano-designed home for our October 2007 issue.

Photo by Catherine Ledner

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Eats Roots and Seeds

Whether sowing fertile ground within the city limits or tilling broad swaths of rural soil, a growing number of people are embracing the ways of the small farmer. This month on dwell.com, we're mapping small farms across the United States, where dirt under the fingernails and sweat on the brow mean self-sufficiency, sustainability, and unbeatably delicious homegrown food. Help us build out the map at dwell.com/small-farms.

Farmhouse Redux

Media coverage of modern design often focuses on metropolitan areas, but there's plenty of astute architecture to be found in far-flung farmland. Hop onto dwell.com for November's exclusive online feature, in which architect Chad Everhart converts a Depression-era North Carolina farmhouse into a barnlike modern home for himself and his wife (below). dwell.com/farmhouse-redux

Photo by Chad Everhart

@ When you see this symbol, head to dwell.com for extended slideshows, interviews, and more.

Jeanine Barone

Writer Jeanine Barone and her Mac were never far from a wireless network while writing this month's "Detour" (p. 66), even when wandering the narrow medieval alleys in Tallinn's Old Town. Back in New York City, as she stood in line for four hours to vote in the 2008 presidential election, she frustrated her fellow queuers by informing them that Tallinn residents vote without leaving their living rooms.

Ryan Blitstein

Ryan Blitstein is a freelance writer and contributing editor at Miller-McCune. Until a few months ago, he'd never heard of the town of Hennepin, Illinois—even though it's only two hours from his Chicago flat. On his visit to the X House in Hennepin ("New Grass Roots," p. 94), Blitstein was as wowed by the wetlands as he was by the home.

Céline Clanet

Photographer Céline Clanet lives in Paris but has regularly traveled to Lapland, Finland, for her photo project *Máze*. There, she has survived the harsh below-zero weather in a *lavvu* (the teepeelike tent of the indigenous Sami people). There was no dry reindeer meat at Jean-Baptiste Barache's house in Normandy, France ("Greener Pasture," p. 86), but there was a *lavvu*-like quality about his wooden home.

Jacob Gordon

Jacob Gordon is a Nashville-based writer and *Treehugger* contributor who, with his fiancée, is at the end of a (seemingly endless) green rehab of a 1900-era southern Victorian. For this month's "Off the Grid" (p. 56), he traveled to Frankfurt, where he toured amazing homes, schools, gyms, and student dorms all built to the Passive House standard, which use 90 percent less energy than typical buildings.

Drew Himmelstein

Drew Himmelstein is a writer living in San Francisco who reports frequently about religion. To learn about modern design in Unitarian Universalist churches ("Essay," p. 114), she spoke to clergy, architects, and historians about the challenges and opportunities involved in creating sacred spaces. She also concluded that Unitarians might just be the nicest flock around.

William Lamb

A question from a hotel bartender—"What the hell are you doing in Vincennes, Indiana?"—was writer William Lamb's cue to dish about the shotgun-style house with a modernist flair that Lauren Ewing had designed and built on her family's farm property nearby ("My House," p. 49). The trip to the southwestern Indiana countryside was a welcome break for Lamb, who lives and works in New Jersey.

Mark Mahaney

Though he hails from the Midwest, photographer Mark Mahaney had never been to Iowa before he left his home in Brooklyn to shoot the Yum Yum Farm ("Farm Fresh," p. 78). Mahaney loves to eat (and grows his own vegetables on his porch), so the highlight of the trip was the home-cooked meals prepared by homeowner Joanna Mouming using local and organic ingredients.

Jens Passoth

Berlin-based photographer Jens Passoth's preferred subjects are people and buildings. He was able to combine his two interests when he traveled to Tallinn to shoot this month's "Detour" (p. 66). "I could feel the strong Russian influence in Tallinn but also a sense of departure from that in areas like the Rotermann Quarter," Passoth says. "The mix makes the city very interesting."

Alex Subrizi

Alex Subrizi is a photographer living in Switzerland. During his overnight train trip to Amsterdam to shoot the Frozen Fountain owner Cok de Rooy ("Design Finder," p. 112), he dreamed that rising sea levels had swallowed the Dutch capital. Subrizi was relieved to find the water in Amsterdam still confined to the canals upon his arrival but has resolved henceforth to travel with his camera in a waterproof case.

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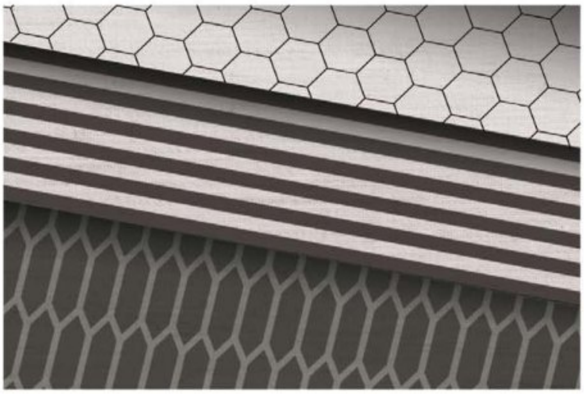

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In the Modern World

Photo by Sergio Pirrone

The conspicuously contoured coastline that edges Iwate, Japan, inspired architect Chiaki Arai as he designed the Ofunato Civic Cultural Center, a concrete beacon that plays host to a wealth of the prefecture's community activities. The building mirrors the shape of an estuary positioned at the base of the surrounding mountains, and it's almost as if erosion were responsible for carving out the building's music studios, theaters, galleries, tea rooms, and library. chiaki-arai .com

November Calendar
Important dates in art and design, with architecture thrown in for good measure: Welcome to Dwell's timeline of the month.

November 1
Richard Neutra, Architect: Sketches and Drawings closes at the Los Angeles Public Library's Getty Gallery. lapl.org

Dwell on Design '09

This past June, Dwell descended on Los Angeles to bring the best of modern design to the City of Angels for the fourth-annual Dwell on Design. We filled the L.A. Convention Center with a lively exhibition floor and offered two theaters packed with exciting programming and panel discussions. Extending out from our downtown hub, we took to the streets with the city's first-ever Mobile Restaurant Row and Night at the Movies at the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA and two full days of home tours that stretched from Montecito Heights to Mar Vista.

Keynote Speaker Daniel Pink Charles and Ray Eames didn't just have designing down pat; they also knew how to run an effective office, as keynote speaker Daniel Pink, the *New York Times* best-selling author of *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*, told the Dwell on Design audience. The dynamic Eames duo crafted a creative workplace by emphasizing autonomy, mastery, and purpose: three factors, Pink said, that encourage success and act as the foundation for what he dubs "Motivation 3.0." Pink believes in seeking out novel challenges and exercising personal capacity to learn and explore, instead of relying on outside encouragement or merit-based bonuses (although we'll argue that positive reinforcement and a promotion never hurts).

More than 15,000 people walked the bustling show floor, browsing through the 180-plus booths featuring the latest designs for every element of the home.

Photos by Alexis Tjian

November 1
Remembering Jan Kaplický, Architect of the Future closes at the Design Museum in London. designmuseum.org

November 4
The Gypsy Modernists: Architecture and Design after Otto Neurath opens at the MAK Center Los Angeles. makcenter.org

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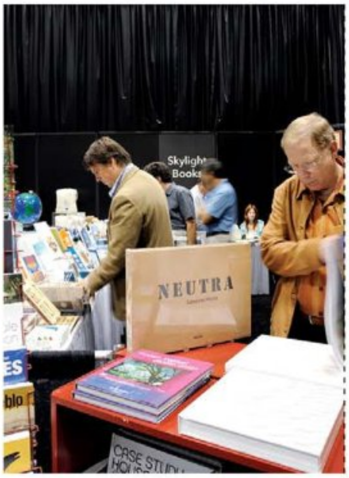

Dwell Outdoor
Dwell Outdoor transformed the exhibition floor into a lush landscape of planters, prefabs, shrubs, and sheds. With solar panels and umbrellas overhead and patio furniture on display for resting weary feet, this green oasis showcased the latest in exterior design.

Dwell Store
The carefully curated Dwell Store gave attendees the chance to walk away with a souvenir, like a pendant light or piece of jewelry from local design shop A+R, luggage tags from travel boutique Flight 001, or a Neutra monograph from Skylight Books.

Modern Family Zone
The Modern Family Zone offered furniture, art, and accessories designed to accommodate (and delight) your budding modernist. While parents browsed the child-friendly cribs, clocks, pillows, and rockers, kids could relax in a reading room, make like Picasso at the painting table, or play with new pals in the interactive area. The Little "e" modern playhouse (pictured), designed by Jonathan Davis of pieceHomes, was donated to Rebuilding Together Peninsula, an organization dedicated to rehabilitating homes and community facilities for low-income families.

Kitchen and Bath
Gleaming tubs and rows of low-flow toilets brought the beauty of the bathroom out from behind closed doors. (*above and right*)

Furniture & Accessories
Guests could keep their feet on the floor but their heads in the Clouds, modular textiles designed by Erwan and Ronan Bouroullec for Ligne Roset. (*left*)

Photos by Alexis Tjian

November 8
After leaving the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, *Bauhaus 1919–1933* opens at New York's Museum of Modern Art. moma.org

November 10
Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future opens at the Museum of the City of New York. mcny.org

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Dror for Target
Unveiled in June, the limited-edition Dror for Target line brought together the Minnesota-based retailer and designer Dror Benshetrit, whose client list includes big names like Boffi and Cappellini. The collection offered affordable, multipurpose furniture and accessories for homes and compact offices. Products were on display in a Logical Homes prefab pavilion.

Coolhaus
The ice-cream-sandwich specialists at Coolhaus prepared two exclusive flavors for the event: Orange Julius Shulman—in honor of our special screening of *Visual Acoustics: The Modernism of Julius Shulman*—and Louis Kahnteloupe—the winning entry of Dwell's competition to name the next Coolhaus flavor. (*right*)

Mobile Eatery Row
Hungry filmophiles took to the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA's courtyard on a bright, balmy evening for red velvet cupcakes, grass-fed beef hot dogs, sweet potato fries, and more served out of L.A.'s finest mobile eateries. After dinner, the sated crowd cozied up for a double-feature night at the movies. (*above*)

Kitchen Ecology: Recipes for Good Design
Dwell partnered with vanguard art, design, and architecture website Designboom to serve up the most innovative developments in the kitchen. This curated exhibition featured upcoming international designers who discussed ways of transforming the kitchen's impact on the environment—both inside the home and beyond. Featuring clocks powered by soil, soap dispensed from old plastic bottles, terra-cotta bowls with natural cooling features, and potato-starch toothpicks, the display proved that the modern kitchen is evolving far beyond a space designed merely for making food.

Home Tours
From the Westside to the east side, we can't help but love all of you, Los Angeles. Twelve generous homeowners on both sides of the east-west divide opened their doors to over 800 houseguests who took our two weekend tours. Visitors from all across the country were given an up-close look at modern design on the leafy, palm tree–lined streets of Los Angeles. The Baxter Residence, by Barbara Bestor Architects (above), gave design enthusiasts a clear view of the Silver Lake hills on a sunny SoCal Saturday.

Photos by Alexis Tjian (Target, Kitchen Ecology, Mobile Eatery), Ashley Schönknecht (Home Tours)

November 20
Chicago Model City closes at the Chicago Architecture Foundation's Atrium Gallery. architecture.org

November 30
What Was Good Design? MoMA's Message 1944–1956 closes at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. moma.org

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Luyanda Mpahlwa

In Mitchell's Plain township in Cape Town, South Africa, living conditions are harsh. The congested urban landscape pushes kids into the streets to play. Poverty forces reliance on found materials for cobbling together shacks. Summers are hot, winters are cold, and relentless winds whip about the plentiful sand.

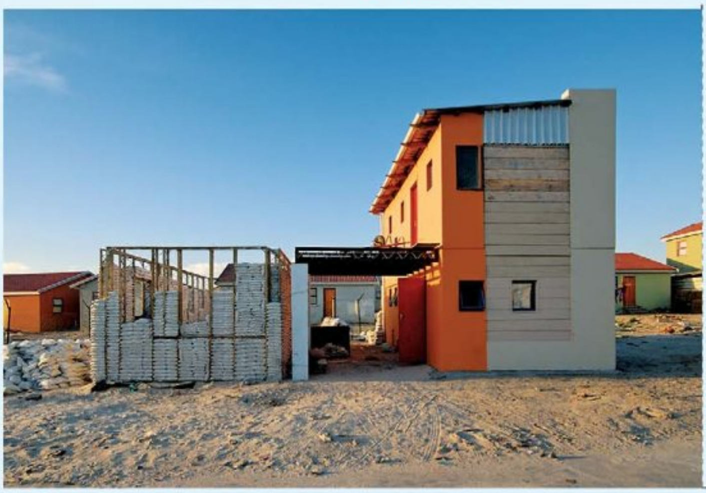
In September 2007, Luyanda Mpahlwa, principal of MMA Architects, designed a two-story house with these factors in mind for Design Indaba's 10x10 Low-Cost Housing Project. The program tasked ten building teams to create attractive, affordable housing schemes using innovative solutions. In the end, ten of Mpahlwa's designs were built.

Mpahlwa took inspiration from the vernacular architecture of his youth in a rural part of the Eastern Cape, where people built homes from mud, water, and timber, to transform what is generally considered a nuisance—the abundance of sand—into an invaluable resource for holding down a house. Unskilled laborers packed bags full of sand and piled them between pieces of pine timber and galvanized metal to create and fill the frames. They plastered wire mesh on the exteriors, giving the buildings as solid and finished a look as those constructed of bricks or concrete.

Though the design itself was a success, the lack of economies of scale made it a challenge to keep the construction costs low. About 1,000 homes would have needed to be built to keep the price tag at the original budget of $6,175 per house. Instead the costs came in at over $10,000.

Artist Hans Jonkers, who previously lived in a shack with his wife, Olga, and six children, was initially wary of calling a house built of sand home. But once he understood the new building system, he was more than happy to move in through the cherry-red front door. Concrete, which is often made using sand as an aggregate, isn't about to lose its status in South Africa any time soon, but for these first-time homeowners, sand in any other form is just as sweet. —Rebecca L. Weber

mmaarch.co.za
designindaba.com



Emiliano Godoy

Sustainable design isn't merely a catchphrase for Mexico City–based industrial designer Emiliano Godoy. The density and environmental tensions of the megalopolis he calls home have both challenged and inspired him to pursue responsible design decisions with his firm, Godoylab, and eco-friendly production practices with Pirwi, the furniture company he launched with Alejandro Castro in 2007.

Ideal working environment: A quiet place with no cell-phone reception or email that has an amazing coffee machine, shortbread cookies, and great hi-fi audio equipment.

Lucky break: Still waiting.

Dream commission: A well-funded, open-ended project about biological-material exploration for design.

Hero: Buckminster Fuller. I really think designers and architects should revisit the idea of "Spaceship Earth" more often.

Antihero: Lee Iacocca. So much talent going into the wrong industry.

Irritating buzzword: "Carbon offset." It should be mandatory and we should call it a "carbon tax" instead of making it sound like an indulgence that can be bought for absolution.

Highest compliment: "I majored in industrial design after hearing your lecture."

A book: *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, by Jared M. Diamond. The relationships he draws between a society's behavior and the most basic characteristics of its surrounding environment are enlightening when thinking about design and its change-inducing potential at the design and specification stages.

A film: *The Boss of It All*, by Lars von Trier. I only saw this 2006 film a few months ago, and I think that the idea of asking oneself out loud—in the middle of a meeting—"What would my character do now?" is hilarious!

An album: *Homónimo*, by Petróleo. It's my own band, so I'm cheating here.

"Eureka!" moment: When I understood that there really is no such place as away, just out of sight.

Worst-ever idea: Never working under someone else before starting my own design office. I would've learned so much and saved a ton of money and time.

Best advice: Be patient. You will hear stories about instant success and heavenly intervention, but it's a long race and there are no shortcuts, so enjoy the ride.

When not designing: Dining with my wife, Jimena, or biking around town to try out new pastry shops.

Best seat in the house: Hans J. Wegner's PP501 from 1949. It's still "the chair." Also Louise Campbell's Bille Goes Zen, although I haven't sat on it yet.

Wish I had: Taken business administration classes at school or studied for an MBA. Juggling a design office and a furniture-manufacturing plant with no formal business training is really hard, if not just plain stupid.

Looking forward to: More hours of sleep!

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Illustration by Elisabeth Moch, Photo courtesy Design Indaba (exterior)

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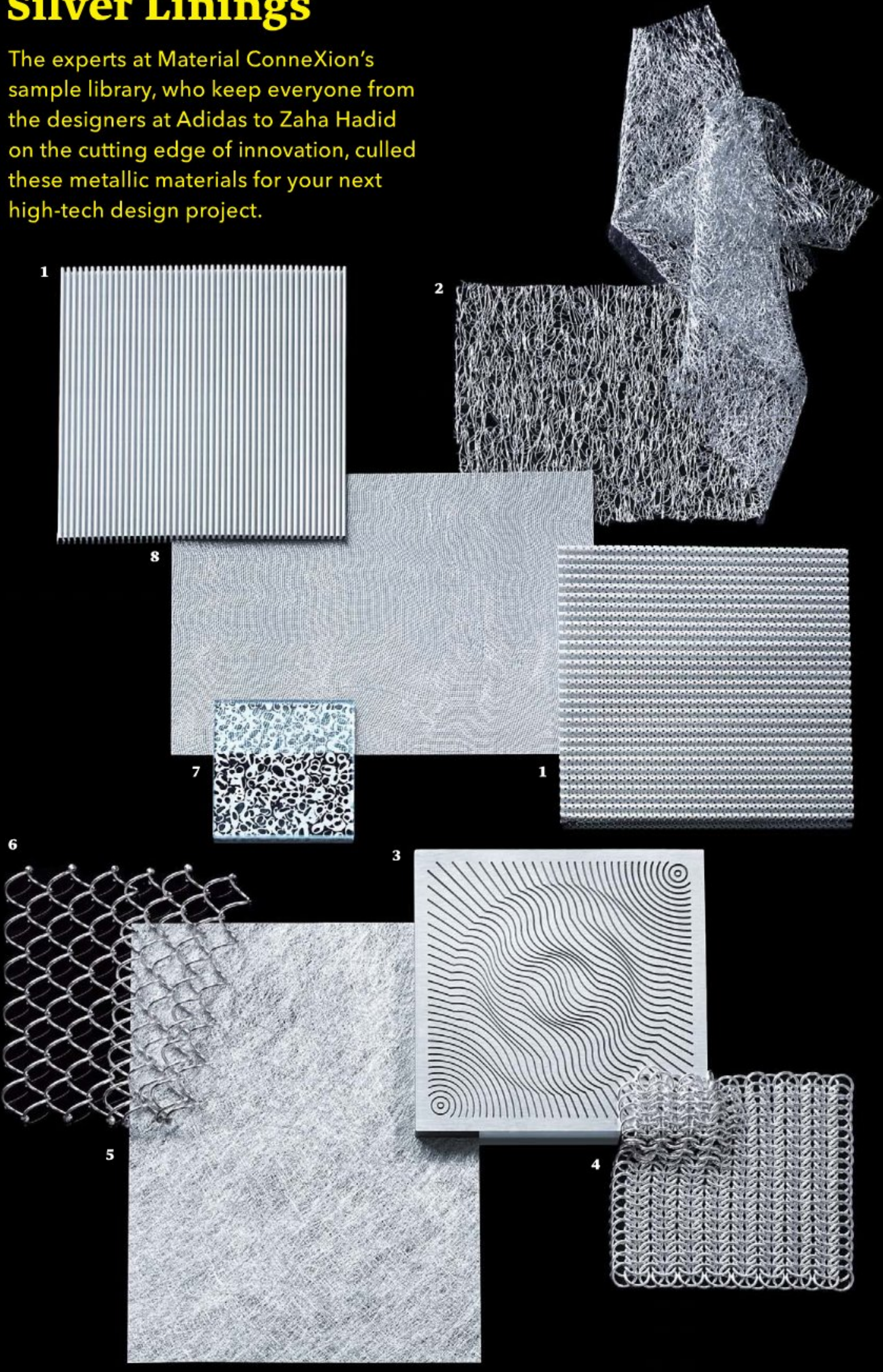
Silver Linings

The experts at Material ConneXion's sample library, who keep everyone from the designers at Adidas to Zaha Hadid on the cutting edge of innovation, culled these metallic materials for your next high-tech design project.



1. Aero by Forms+Surfaces, MC# 0247-05
This corrugated anodized aluminum product is 100 percent recyclable. Aero will add an instant high-tech Richard Rogers-meets-*Doctor Who* flair to anything.

2. Spun TPU Textile by Sommers Plastic Products, MC# 2604-22
A mesh of extruded thermoplastic polyurethane forms this surprisingly rubbery material.

3. Xylogramm by Keil, MC# 6381-02
The spirit of Verner Panton lives on in these CNC-routed panels. The op art–inspired patterns add depth to any surface.

4. Maille CM by Spathis Philp, MC# 6333-02
Available in a range of link diameters, this lightweight aluminum fabric lends itself to a variety of unexpected applications.

5. Carisma Metallic by Junkers & Müllers, MC# 6323-01
Vapor-deposited aluminum coating just like mom used to make! This paperlike textile consists of jillions of coated polyester and polyamide threads.

6. Sierra Papa Large by Twentinox, MC# 5946-01
This large-scale architectural chain mail could keep your next project safe from marauding Crusaders. Use it for cladding, curtains, or even conveyor belts.

7. Glass by 3form, MC# 3416-07
This decorative glass is not unlike an enhanced version of a microscopic slide—albeit one that could be ten feet wide.

8. Homapal by Homanit, MC# 5620-02
A high-pressure laminate made from real metals such as stainless steel or copper, Homapal is available in a range of intricate textures and patterns and sports a miraculous .05-inch profile.

Photo by Peter Belanger

Materialism

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Black is Black

We all live in a material world, but it is especially true for Material ConneXion. The pioneering international material-database and consulting agency has an ever-expanding library of over 4,500 materials. We recruited their team to select a swath of state-of-the-art materials that could find their way into our homes.

1. Weave 3 by VD Werkstätten, MC# 2239-05
If the texture of seatbelts tickles your fancy, the embossed patterns of Weave 3 (applied by thermal fusion) are a tactile turn-on.

2. Decorative Laminated MDF by Kinon, MC# 6458-01
The most prosaic of materials, medium-density fiberboard, gets a face-lift with a hand-cast resin coating, allowing for 3-D effects and textures.

3. Millennium Textile by Omnipel Technologies, MC# 5343-16
Available in rolls up to 164 feet long, this thermoformable textile emulates the look of carbon fiber, Kevlar, or metallic glass.

4. 3D Textiles by Anne Kyyrö Quinn, MC# 5453-01
Wool felt takes on a new dimension, literally. The fluted patterns have been used for cushions, but could clad a whole room.

5. Riverstone Black Heart by Effepimarmi, MC# 4268-04
Silvery black pebbles encased in a transparent resin remind us of Jennifer Lopez's movie *The Cell*—as though this could only exist in CGI.

6. Jali by Sensitile Systems, MC# 5058-03
Part *Star Trek*, part John Galliano, these mesmerizing polymer panels will bring a touch of bling to any environment.

7. Xorel Embossed by Carnegie, MC# 0010-13
Xorel withstands a million double rubs before showing signs of wear. Now the polyethylene yarn fabric can be hot-pressed with five embossed patterns.

8. Rollout Custom Wallpaper by Rollout Creative Inc., MC# 6243-01
Create your own nontoxic, washable wallpaper with a pattern of your choice.

Photo by Peter Belanger

Materialism

@ For more materials visit dwell.com/materialism or materialconnexion.com/dwell

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The Fisher House
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FISHER ARCHitecture
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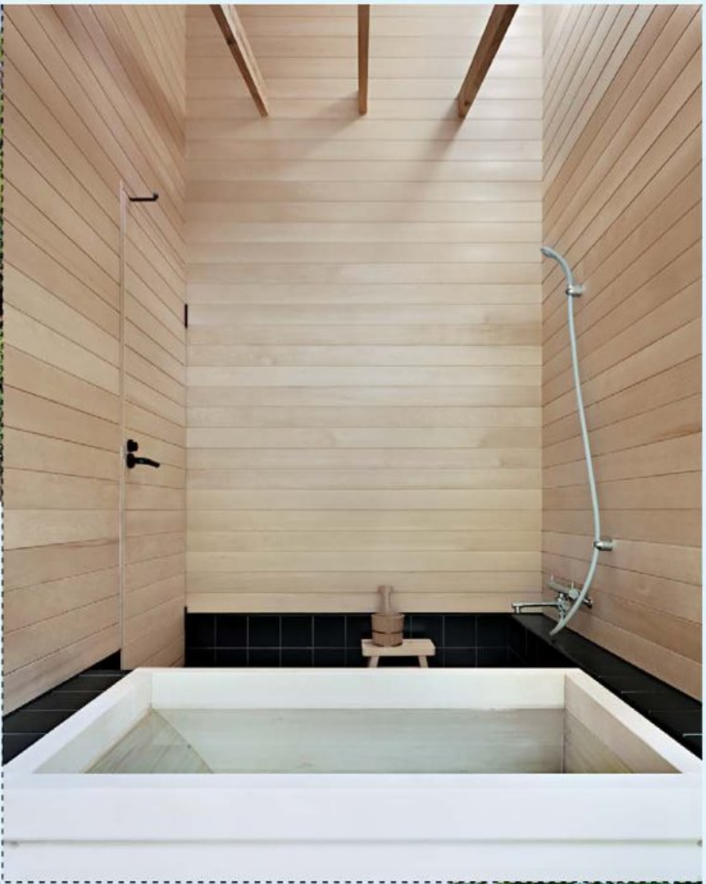
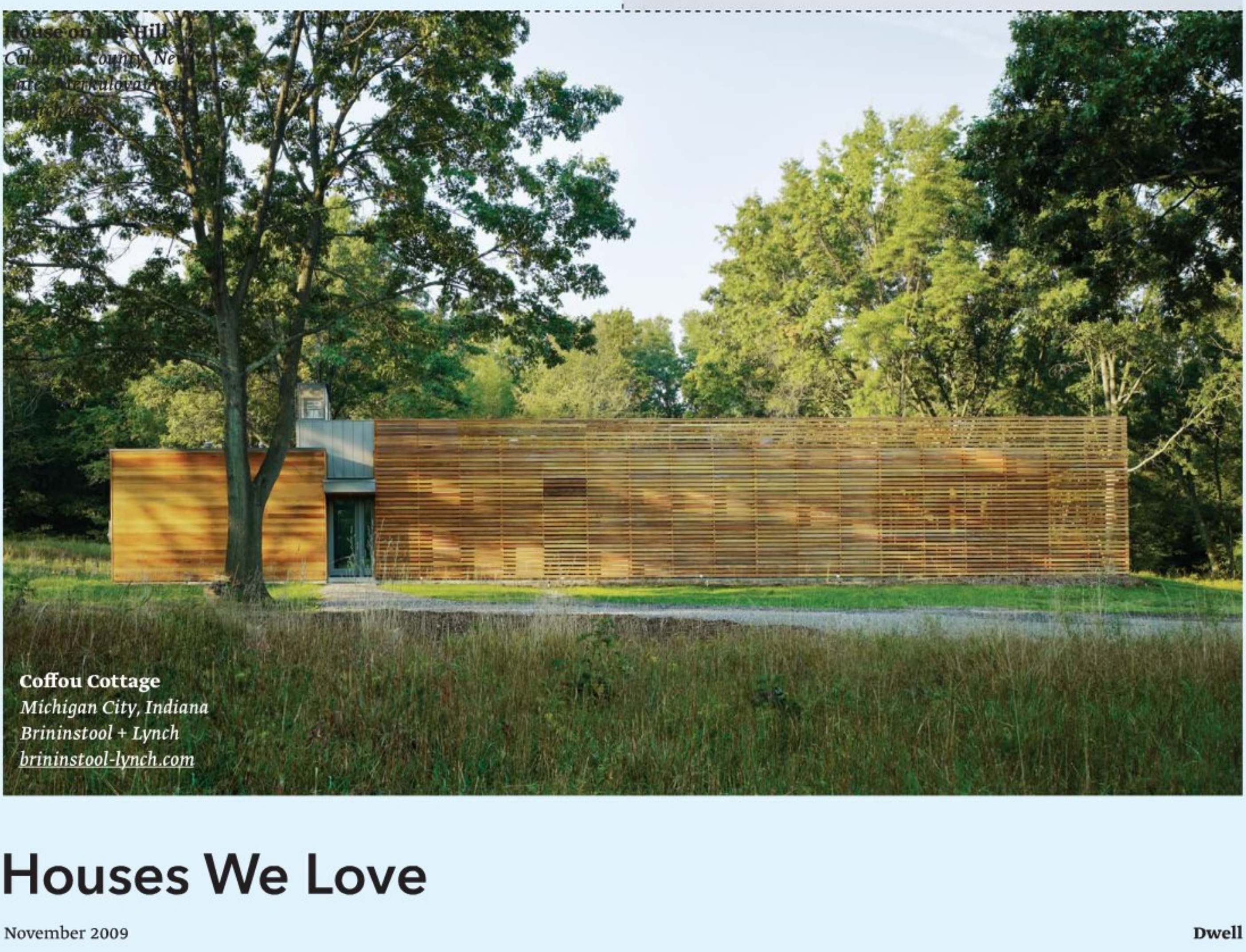


RSH:3
Gifu, Japan
Kazuhiko Kishimoto for Acaa
ac-aa.com

House on the Hill
Columbia County, New York
Gates Merkulova Architects
[illegible]



Coffou Cottage
Michigan City, Indiana
Brininstool + Lynch
brininstool-lynch.com

Photos by Eric Fisher (Fisher House), James Silverman (RSH:3), Chris Barrett/Hedrich Blessing and courtesy Western Red Cedar (Coffou)

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Photos by Christian Schaulin

Houses We Love

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

08

09

customer file   № 079 01 102007 036

Arthur Einwiller / Seattle

01 My Son's favorite robot, Gary
02 Dad's Playboy tie tack from the Chicago years
03 Vintage Pisces tin can matches
04 The Appalachian Trail in summer of 1992
05 Danish tray found at an estate sale
06 Rope from my first Yosemite Valley climb
07 Dad and me circa 1974
08 My Foscarini Twiggy XL table lamp from YLighting
09 Prized Japanese toy train from my collection
10 Monthly poker game with old college buddies

10

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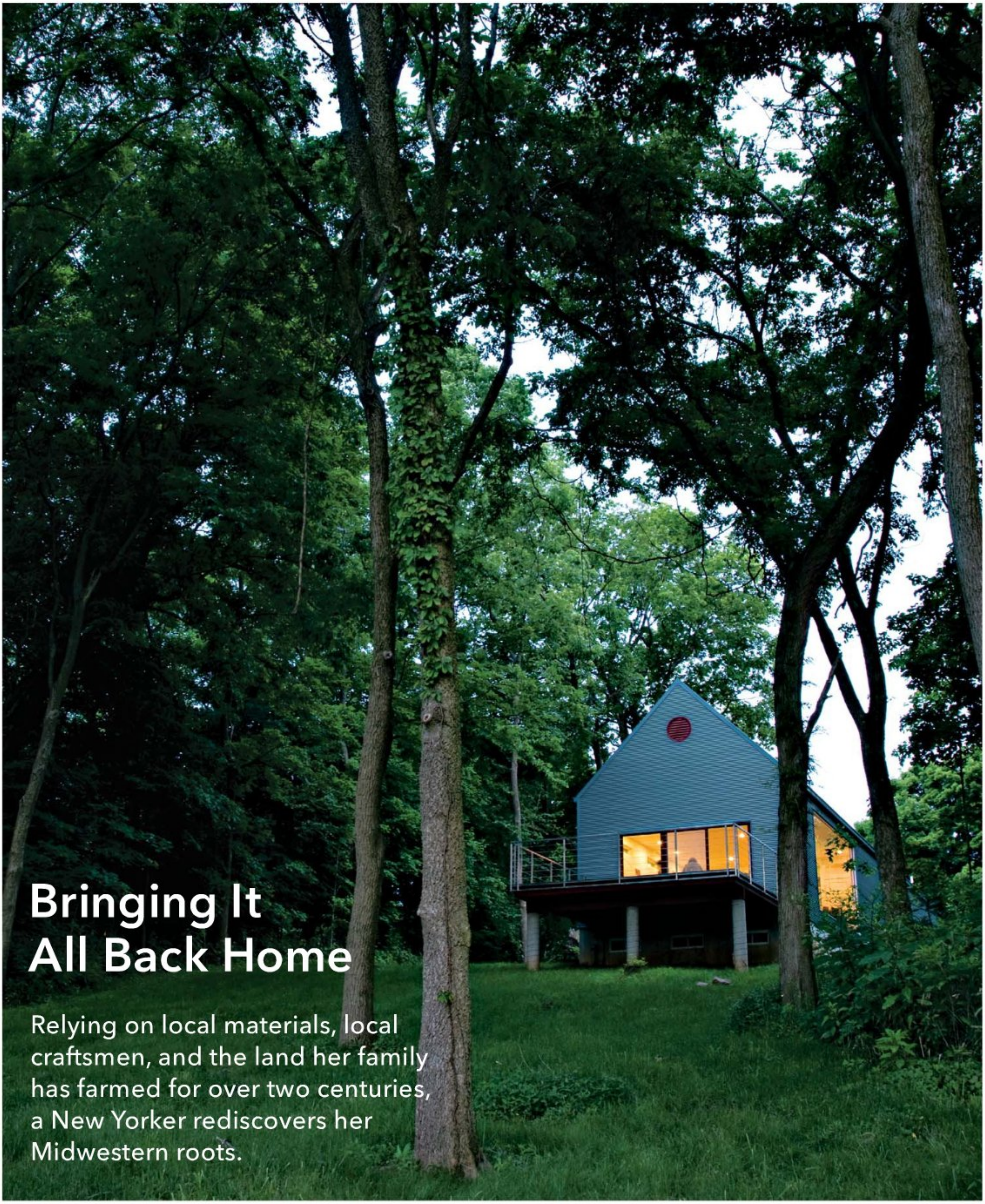


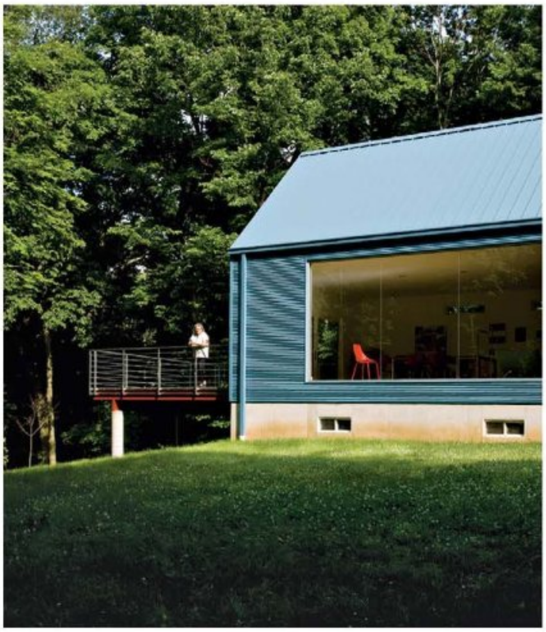
Bringing It All Back Home

Relying on local materials, local craftsmen, and the land her family has farmed for over two centuries, a New Yorker rediscovers her Midwestern roots.

Story by William Lamb
Photos by Kyoko Hamada

Lauren Ewing's stylish but unassuming shotgun-style house in Vincennes, Indiana, is set into a hill overlooking a field she has known since childhood.

Rattled by 9/11 and worn down by 34 years in lower Manhattan, artist Lauren Ewing wanted to build a retreat where she could escape the city for a few weeks or months at a time. Ewing, a sculptor and Rutgers University art professor, considered sites in the Northeast but eventually turned to the 500-acre property in Vincennes, Indiana, that her family has farmed since 1806. The house she designed—a version of the venerable Southern-style shotgun house, updated with a modernist flair—has given her a place to unwind and reconnect with her Midwestern roots.



I went away to school when I was 17, and for the next 40 years I basically came back here occasionally on vacation, and that was it. After 9/11, I had witnessed not only my whole life but also my whole neighborhood and community change overnight. I decided to build a house in a place that was kind of a refuge, where I could be self-sufficient if I needed to. And I wanted to spend time with my brother, Mark, who was just seven when I went away to school.

I had looked in other places. I thought, Well, I'll build a house on Cape Cod or Long Island, because I'm a kayaker and I love the water. And, you know, the real estate prices are just insane. I wanted to be efficient about what I did and I built this whole house in Indiana for $300,000.

I've always loved what I call "the wisdom of poor architecture." I traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, with my brother, and I realized that it was the shotgun house that I really loved. It's eccentric in its proportions. It's what a kid draws when he draws a house; it's an archetype of a house. So this is just a big shotgun house: a single gable that runs from end to end without any beams and was efficient to build. I knew I could get 60 floor joists that were exactly the same and 60 roof trusses that were exactly the same and that I could create a shape that would remain true.

This is a two-bedroom house with only one bathroom, a kitchen, and a very large studio/living room. There are decks on both ends—including a reading deck off my bedroom. And then it has a full basement, which houses one of my studios and is poured concrete, so it's wonderfully cool.

There aren't a lot of windows on the front of the house. One of my themes was to come into what looks like a ▶

Ewing used Canadian maple for the hallway and living-room floors (top), giving them a bright, clean look. A built-in shelving system borders the hearth, creating functional and decorative storage spaces for firewood collected on-site. The floor-to-ceiling living-room window (bottom) was inspired by Philip Johnson's Glass House.

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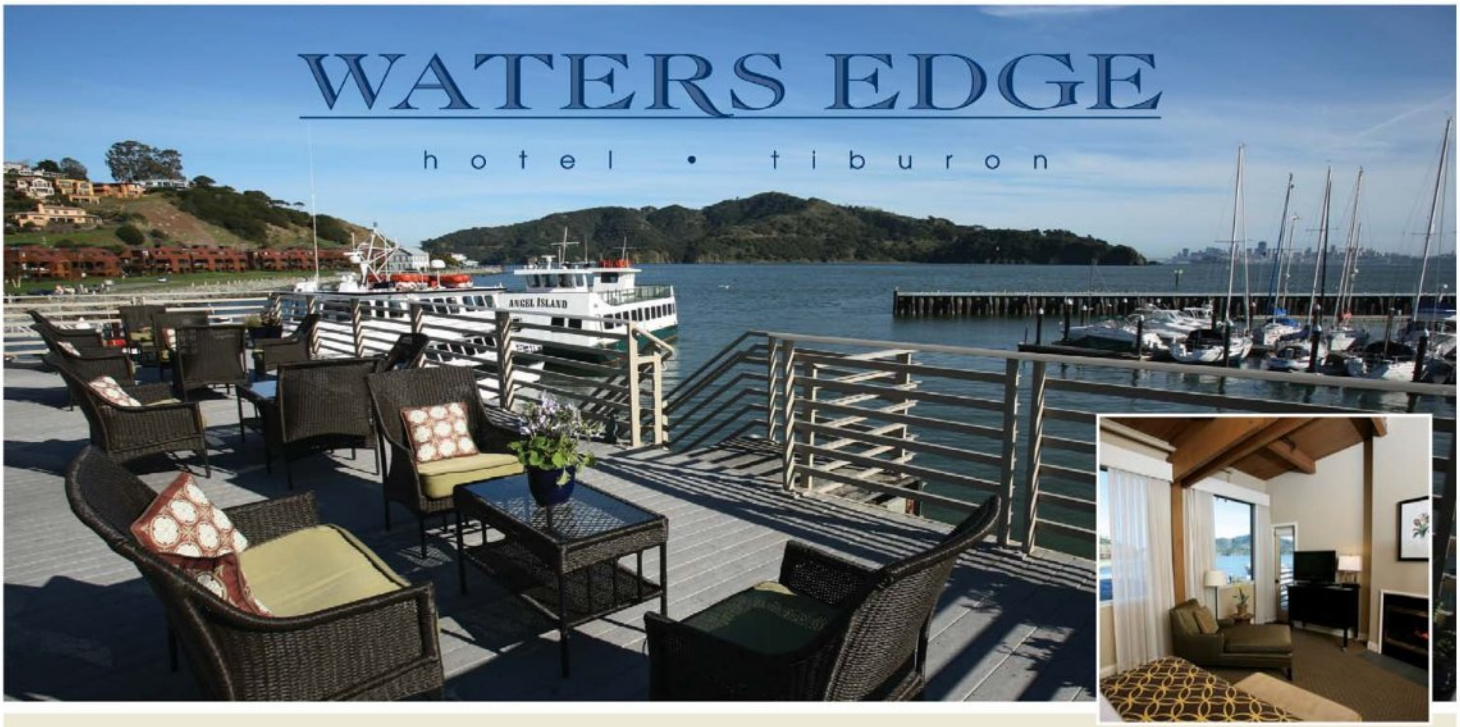

Nestled on a historic dock in the quaint village of Tiburon amongst antique shops and restaurants, the serene aesthetics of the Waters Edge Hotel match the peaceful nature of its surroundings. Relax in our tranquil guestrooms. Sip wine in the fire-lit lobby. Bask in the stunning views of the San Francisco Bay from our waterfront deck. This hotel is all about capturing the moment, and holding onto it long after you've returned home.

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closed space and then have the whole house open up when you walk in.

I wanted to make something that was going to be easy to take care of, too, so I sided the whole house in corrugated metal, the kind that's usually used in the great big distribution warehouses that you see off highways. But I like it because the coatings of color are baked on, and the siding has a 25-year guarantee. For the exterior I picked Wedgwood blue. The walnut trees are yellow and the maples are orange and yellow, so it looks absolutely stunning in the fall. It's a very cool, very recessive color—almost the color of a shadow—so it doesn't stand out. It sort of sits back.

My brother did all the road building, landscaping, and tree clearing. I used a local company to make the doors, and a glass company that puts windows in grocery stores to do my studio window. I used solid Indiana limestone for the steps and Indiana sandstone for the hearth. The entire house was built with local materials and local craftsmen. These weren't exotic choices, but they're practical.

One of my extravagances was to get Canadian maple for the studio and hallway floors, because I wanted something that was almost pattern-free. One of the bedroom floors is maple that was taken from this site, and the other bedroom is ash, which was harvested on-site as well. All of the cabinetry is made from wild cherry, which we have in another field on the property.

The whole house opens up to the north, so I never turn the lights on until nine o'clock at night in the summer. I get this wonderful colorless, shadowless light all day long.

I wanted the front of the house to look out on this wonderful little valley, which goes through the most dramatic changes. It's beautiful here. It's just a different world, and it's a world that I basically didn't have time for as a younger person. As I get older, I want to have time for it. I want to be here. It's easier on my body and my brain. I love New York. There's the most critical and interested art audience in the smallest geographical area of any place in the world, so it's very intense. And I like that. But I like this too.

A leaf-green countertop adds a splash of color to the kitchen (top), and a sofa by the New York-based designer Stanley Jay Friedman (bottom left) does the same for the living room. The surfaces of both decks—including the small one off Ewing's bedroom (above right)—were fashioned from recycled plastic fibers.

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Home Plate
Ewing designed a floor-to-ceiling window to provide an expansive view while bathing her living room in natural light. She hired D & H Glass, a local company that makes plate-glass windows for grocery stores, to join three standard-size windows, filling the 9-by-18-foot space for under $4,000.

Water Closet
To minimize the cost and complexity of construction, Ewing concentrated her plumbing at the center of the house. The kitchen sink backs up against the hookups for her washer and dryer, which are in a closet behind the house's single bathroom.

Rocks on the Rocks
Ewing's builder, John Lane, used a front-end loader to stack slabs of Indiana limestone for the house's front steps. Each slab rested atop a layer of ice cubes, creating just enough clearance for the nylon straps to be pulled free. The slabs settled into place as the ice melted in the summer sun.

Ripple Effect
For the exterior and roof, Ewing chose Una-Clad corrugated-steel siding. The material, more commonly found on commercial buildings, is lightweight, durable, easy to maintain, and recyclable.
unaclad.com

Cherry Picked
The cabinets in Ewing's bedroom were made from wild cherry trees harvested from the property. The enormous trunks were too big to fit into the portable sawmill that her brother, Mark, brought to the property, so he blew them apart with dynamite and fed the pieces into the mill. The cabinets were made by Ewing's friend Paul Keller.

Make It Yours

Click here for more information:
Cherry cabinets: cherrycabinets.com
Indiana limestone: ilco.com
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Passive Acceptance

Virtually unknown in the United States, Passive Houses are starting to make a big impression with their small footprints.

In the famously rainy city of Portland, Oregon, everyone knows that a leaky house is a recipe for disaster. But Portland-based architect Miloš Jovanović isn't worried so much about water seepage as the more insidious and common leakage of air from a poorly sealed building, which hinders indoor climate control and wastes massive amounts of energy. While green building benchmarks set by the United States in recent years have contributed to some improvement in this arena, Jovanović believes the most effective criteria for energy-efficient construction can be found in Europe's Passivehaus standard (known in North America as Passive House).

The distinguishing trait of a Passive House is the absence of a furnace. Though many green building strategies seek more efficient ways to heat our spaces, Jovanović explains, "Passive House focuses on reducing the need for heating power in the first place. A building designed to this standard uses 90 percent less energy, at which point you can heat an entire house with a hair dryer."

Jovanović's first foray into Passive House principles began when his firm, Root Design Build, was commissioned to design a residence on a plateau site above Oregon's Hood River. That project is due to be completed in the spring of 2010. Having previously designed Portland's first LEED Platinum home, Jovanović had experience working with a catalog of sustainability guidelines, but he relished the simplicity of the Passive House system. "The standard permits a large degree of freedom in building techniques and materials," he says, "as long as you can achieve the very strict energy and envelope requirements." ▶

Story by Jacob Gordon

The Shift House, by Portland-based firm Root Design Build, is among the first residences in the United States to be designed according to Passive House standard. The project got its name from the "shifted" placement of the front and rear sections of the house. The configuration eliminates hallways and maximizes room space.

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The Aggressive Standard of a Passive House

Passive House requirements are surprisingly simple compared to many other green building standards used today. Provided that the house is airtight and stays below maximum energy consumption limits, you've made the grade.

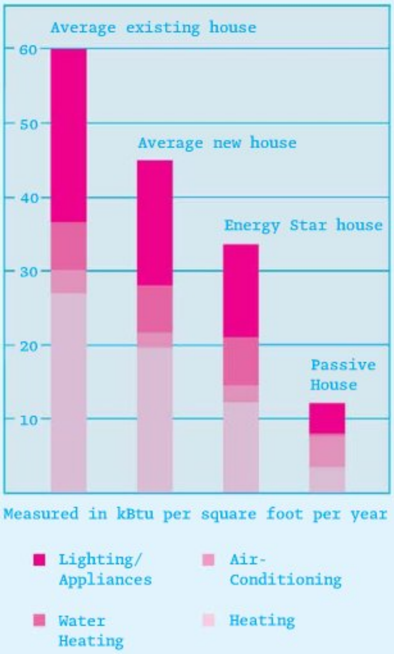
Certified Passive House criteria:

1. Heating and cooling energy each must consume no more than 15 kWh per square meter of usable floor space annually year (4.75 kBtu per square foot).

2. Primary energy must consume no more than 120 kWh per square meter of usable floor space annually (38 kBtu per square foot).

3. Air tightness must measure at or below 0.6 air changes per hour (the number of times per hour that a room's total air volume is exchanged with fresh air) at a pressure rating of 50 Pascals.

Energy Usage Comparison



Click here: For more on Passive House in the U.S. visit passivehouse.us. For international information visit passiv.de.

Finding adequate materials to reach those targets wasn't easy. The architects had to search high and low for North American manufacturers making products of high enough performance to yield an absolutely airtight seal. Jovanović attributes the shortage of available materials in part to "a lack of government support for the enhancement of building technologies. Europeans are much more encouraging of innovation through incentives for builders and homeowners."

Where he has found encouragement is at the nascent Passive House Institute U.S. (PHIUS) and through conversations with Katrin Klingenberg, the institute's executive director. Klingenberg, also an architect, lives in Urbana, Illinois, in the first Passive House completed in the United States.

Klingenberg designed her home in 2002 with her late husband, Nicholas Smith. Having spent seven subzero winters in Urbana, she can attest that the 1,200-square-foot house remains plenty warm, thanks to 12-inch wall cavities packed with high-density blown-in fiberglass and four additional inches of foam on the exterior of the stud wall. In summer triple-paned windows and a 14-inch polystyrene pad below the foundation obviate the need for a mechanical air conditioner. To eliminate penetrations in the outer skin, a blower door test checks for leaks by depressurizing the house, detecting spots where air sneaks in.

Having a sealed house may sound about as delightful as living in the aft cabin of an airplane, but Passive Houses boast superior interior air quality, thanks to recovery ventilators—special fans that draw in a steady breeze of fresh air while discharging stale air. To help condition fresh air before it circulates through the house, a 100-foot-long air tube runs underground to capture the constant temperature below the frost line.

Klingenberg's home has performed very closely to the predictive calculations used in its design—consuming about 75 percent less energy than a comparable Urbana house. While there are still fewer than 15 of these structures in the United States,

Klingenberg says she gets over 100 inquiries daily from builders and bureaucrats asking about the amazing house that needs no boiler or air conditioner. In her explanation, she points to the 15,000 to 20,000 Passive Houses that have been built in Europe in the two decades since the system first gained prominence and shares the documented research that has come from having such a sizable test sample. The European Union–funded research revealed that unlike LEED-certified buildings, which have shown discrepancies between energy modeling and real-world performance, Passive Houses are highly successful in meeting the energy consumption levels specified by the standard.

As debate heats up over the stringency of LEED's energy requirements, Passive Houses have an opportunity to gain a foothold in the United States. By adding a photovoltaic system, Klingenberg says, a Passive House can meet the carbon-neutrality benchmark for 2020 laid out by the 2030 Challenge, an ambitious goal supported by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Though Jovanović and Klingenberg are part of a very small army of North American Passive House advocates, they both have confidence that the system will prove itself. A 75 percent reduction in energy bills is a good start, but the architects know that examples of stellar design will also be key to convincing the curious. As the Shift House reaches completion and other new Passive House projects get under way, they're eager to demonstrate that a supersealed space is the quickest route to a sustainable—and comfortable—future. ▮

Photo courtesy Passive House Institute U.S.

In Katrin Klingenberg's house (above), a completely airtight design doesn't leave her lacking a sense of openness. A two-story wall of windows invites sunlight in during the day, maximized through the thoughtful orientation of the building on its site.

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Media Matters

Crates of vinyl, an overbrimming welter of books, and a rat's nest of cables and cords emanating from receivers, TVs, iPod docks, and perhaps the odd Victrola are the hallmarks of the media-obsessed collector. Perhaps it's the *World Book Encyclopedias* from 1973 or the complete *Magnum, P.I.* DVD box set—either way our desire to amass and display far more media than we'll likely consume is as rampant as ever. And though the oldsters are more likely to play their Gordon Lightfoot on the one-twos than the digital one-zeros, every generation faces the age-old question: How do I store my library?

Whether you've gone strictly digital, with nothing more than a ThinkPad and an MP3 player, or you still cling to your Betamax cassettes, we've got a media storage option for you. From understated and efficient to wall-spanning installations that send as loud a message as your back issues of *Ranger Rick*, this selection is bound to satisfy any size annal and any size pocketbook. We asked archivist and filmmaker Rick Prelinger, founder of the Prelinger Library and Prelinger Archives, to help us through.

A Note on Our Expert:
Rick Prelinger has a lot of media to store, not only at his house, which he says is overrun with books, movies, and the like, but also at the Prelinger Library he founded in San Francisco with his wife, Megan, in 2004. The pair has collected 30,000 volumes of books and periodicals and another 30,000 bits of print ephemera like maps and pamphlets. When you consider that the Prelinger Archives, founded in 1982, has already relocated 200,000 cans of film—movies, instructional films, anything really—to the Library of Congress, you start to get a sense for both Prelinger's yen to amass and his contribution to posterity.

Story by Aaron Britt
Portrait by Laurie Frankel

USM Haller

USM Haller by Paul Schärer and Fritz Haller for USM Modular Furniture / W 70" x H 44" x D 14" / Chrome-plated brass, chromed steel, powder-coated metal, glass / 11 standard colors with glass, perforated metal, and fabric acoustic panels / From $4,105 / usm.com

Expert Opinion: You're certainly buying something substantial here. It weighs a ton, though if you have the money it's lovely. I don't see this one going out of style and it's quite easy to integrate into what you already have in your house. But at some point you have to decide if you want to put your funds into your collection or the way you store it.

What We Think: The USM Haller is the clear classic of the modular bunch, a design that has stood the test of time and earned a spot in the modernist canon. We like the Credenza model (three rectangular boxes in a row, each with a door), though its endlessly reconfigurable form, a feature of the spherical-connector-and-chromed-steel-rod system, makes it easy to expand or contract. The USM is pricey, heavy, and will surely outlive you. ▶

MShelving

MShelving by Loadbearing / Media Console configuration / W 81" x H 20" x D 16.8" / Galvanized steel, powder-coated steel, wooden veneers / Doors come in 21 colors and various wood and metal finishes / $526–$1,046 / loadbearing.com

Expert Opinion: This seems a lot more like media storage and less like furniture. It's not overly delicate like some shelving systems, though it's not Neanderthal either. I love the color choices, that old Herman Miller trick of multicolored panels that still works so well. I would not recommend this for the underdesigned house because it could easily dominate the room. I could see this in an office or retail environment or even a warehouse.

What We Think: Loadbearing hails from Switzerland and is like the USM Haller system's hip younger brother. The color options and the ability to customize are wonderfully appealing, and swapping out doors is an easy task. Loadbearing's website allows you to play around with different configurations, colors, and door options. With such a malleable system and reasonable price, it's our favorite.

Ivar

Ivar combination storage for Ikea / W 52.75" x H 70.5" x D 19.6" / Untreated pine and galvanized steel / System offers many modular units / $190 for three-tiered base shelf / ikea.com

Expert Opinion: I think of this as a skeleton that can be fleshed out in a number of different ways. The untreated wood is a good, honest material, and considering that certain Ikea veneers don't age very well, I'll take the untreated stuff. You have loads of options and components here, so I'd say that if you are quite conscious and intentional in designing your environment you could do it with Ivar.

What We Think: Ivar is the stalwart of Ikea storage, a bastion of modular efficiency in a sea of blond wood. Its two different shelf depths (16.75" and 19.6"), metal cross-bar bracing, and breathtaking array of add-ons—CD holders, doors, boxes, cabinets, chests, even a shoe rack—make it by far the most customizable system we've seen. Drawbacks include the fact that you'll look like you live in a mud room, but at this price, and with so many options available, Ivar's not so terrible. ▸

Sandra Wheeler and Alfred Zollinger, Matter Practice, Ecotopiaries, 2006. Photo: Harry Zernike

Domino

Domino by TemaHome / W 63" x H 27" x D 17" / Chocolate, wenge, and pure white finishes / $493 per L-shaped unit / temahome.com

Expert Opinion: This is fun! It's like Tetris. The Domino is a better option for those who live closer to the floor and is a bit more entry level than others we've seen. I also like that when you put a couple together you get some unexpected remnant spaces. Those are always nice to discover, and are a way to get much more out of what you've got. I also like that it needn't be a perfect square. Angle it out a bit, make it oblique, strike a blow against Teutonic industrialism. Craft with a "C" not a "K."

What We Think: Domino comes in on the low end of the price spectrum and functions quite well on its own as a TV stand and small shelving solution. Add a couple more L-shaped units, either all at once or bit by bit, and the geometric possibilities are endless. And at 67 pounds, installation of this sturdy guy is a breeze.

Balance

Balance Console by Terence Conran for the Conran Shop / W 47.25" x H 27"x D 12" / Oak and oak or walnut veneer / $750 / conranusa.com

Expert Opinion: This is great—another entry-level investment and perfect for the digital-music household. If your media scene is a laptop and an iPod dock, this is perfect for you. It feels much less locked in than other shelving systems and really makes you think about what you want to display. I love that there is a coffee table and bookshelf in the same series and could easily see those in the living room along with the console.

What We Think: This is one of the smaller options, and it looks like a sturdy choice for the more diminutive environs of apartment living. It's best suited to smaller collections—its cubbies are a good fit for LPs, books, CDs, and DVDs—but it can surely handle your TV and stereo. We agree with Prelinger that adding the Balance coffee table or bookshelf to your living room can give the space some cohesion without breaking the bank.

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The Kumu Art Museum (left), designed by Finnish architect Pekka Vapaavuori, showcases primarily Estonian art in a building defined by clean lines, limestone, and glass.

Ringed by cafes and restaurants, vibrant Town Hall Square (right) has been the center of public events, from executions to festivals, for centuries.

Estonia's capital city is located along the Baltic Sea, and though it may be synonymous with its medieval Old Town, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, Tallinn is hardly frozen in the 14th century. This thoroughly wired burgh, where citizens easily vote and pay parking tickets online, is a hotbed of technological and design innovation as well as the birthplace of the free Internet phone service, Skype. The old continues to inform the new. The Rotermann Quarter, a former factory district, is being transformed into an attractive mixed-use neighborhood with a contemporary art nouveau style while maintainingits 19th-century merchant motif. Kultuurikatel, an old power station with a dramatic 290-foot-high chimney along the 28-mile-long former industrial waterfront, will soon see new life as a cultural center. The waterfront, an off-limits military border zone during Soviet times, is the centerpiece of development in preparation for Tallinn's becoming a European Cultural Capital for 2011.

After centuries of foreign rule by the Danes, Swedes, Germans, and most recently the Soviets, Estonia finally regained its independence in 1991 and joined the European Union in 2004. Since then, Tallinn has been finding itself at a frenetic pace. Edgy galleries such as Disaini-ja Arhitektuurigalerii; nightclubs like Stereo, a space age–style lounge; and Asian-inspired restaurants like Chedi and Ö are popping up not far from the defensive towers and Gothic churches of yore. Beyond the Old Town, contemporary architecture—from the renowned Kumu Art Museum to City Plaza and the new Tallinn Synagogue—places Tallinn firmly in the 21st century.

With all this unfettered ambition, Veronika Valk, a 32-year-old architect and urban planner, epitomizes the energy and fearless freethinking of Tallinn's talented young populace. Zizi & Yoyo is the architecture firm she shares with her partner. It specializes in unconventional, eco-friendly, and playful design solutions. Valk has designed public buildings, private homes, interiors, landscapes, and mass public events like the Tallinn Festival of Light, where she lit up the dark winter streetscape with balloons and smoke clouds. ⊪

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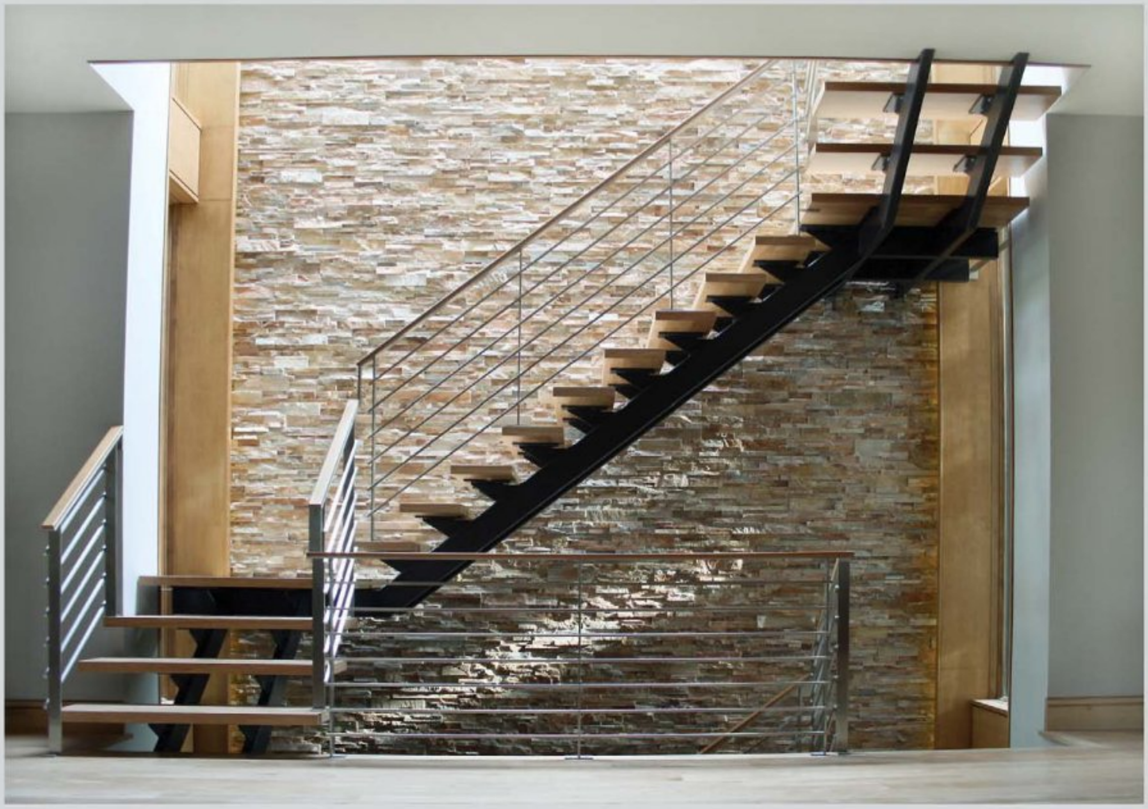

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With Tallinn set to be European Cultural Capital 2011, what preparations are afoot?
Our firm, Zizi & Yoyo, is collaborating closely with Foundation Tallinn 2011 [to prepare the cultural programming]. Aside from the renovations of Linnahall [an immense Soviet-era concert hall being converted into a conference center] and Kultuurikatel, there's a competition for a new town hall. Next to Linnahall and Kultuurikatel, we'll see a fish market, which would operate as an open-air market during the first part of the day and in the afternoon and evening as a public square for a variety of events. The hydroplane hangars, the first European dome concrete structures from 1916 and 1917, could become arts venues with bars, restaurants, and more. The three-dome structure offers spectacular acoustics for musical events.

With so much building going on in Tallinn right now, which architectural firms do you find particularly inspiring?
Kosmos and KOKO are great. They both stand for innovation. Kosmos did the Rotermann site while KOKO designed the Puppet Theater and also the Fahle House, a crumbling old paper factory that they crowned with a modern glass box. For the childlike Puppet Theater, they chose oversize furniture in which you feel as if you're Alice in Wonderland. Yet it's all done in a delicate and imaginative way that encourages children's creativity. The Fahle House's symbolic value lies in the shiny glass box emerging from the historic limestone walls, as if Tallinn's new talent is bubbling over the edge of the UNESCO kettle.

How do you bring innovation to the Old Town without sacrificing preservation?
Contemporary building is usually forbidden in the Old Town. So I was surprised when the Historic Protection Department approved the striped beach chairs in the landscaped park along Harjumägi. This new playground design covers up the old ruins, which were previously exhibited. The brightly colored chairs and the wintertime ice rink are nice to look at, but they hide the story of previous times. If I had redesigned that space, I would have used glass galleries atop the ruins, combined with lighting that highlights interesting details and draws attention to the spaces below. The most delicate, respectful, and perhaps the only way to introduce architectural innovation in the Old Town is via temporary installations and events, such as the Festival of Light, which lasts throughout the long winter.

You've been called a mobile architect—where do you like to work?
I enjoy enormously starting my day walking around the city and stopping where there's something happening, taking my laptop from one place to another. I choose different environments depending on the mood ►

As a symbol of Tallinn's architectural rebirth, the Fahle House (top) by local firm KOKO is deliberately conspicuous, thanks to the glass apartment box perched like a parasite atop the old limestone structure. An expansive plaza (bottom) leads to the entryway of the harborside Linnahall, a bulky, symmetrical concrete-and-stone concert hall that takes its name from one of the looming figures of Estonia's Soviet past: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

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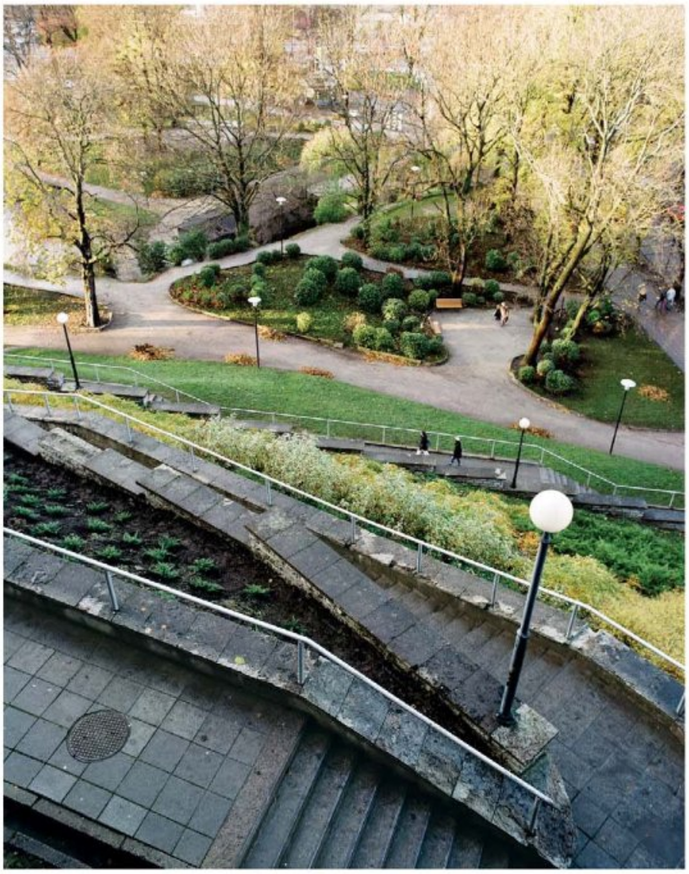

they'll put me in. For example, C'est La Vie is an art deco–style restaurant with background music from the1930s. It's different because most Tallinn cafes play pop music, which is pretty mundane. Background sound should be part of the design. If I need to relax, though, I go there. On a bright summer morning, it's simply brilliant to work on Town Hall Square and prepare drawings to the rhythms of a brass band concert. In the afternoon, I might go to the restaurant Vertigo on the roof terrace of City Plaza.

Where would you go to sample Tallinn's art scene?

Kunstihoone was the only art exhibition space in town until 2006, when the Kumu Art Museum opened. Kunstihoone is now the only major exhibit hall in the city center and they are very particular about what they show. Kumu has quality exhibitions, and director Marika Valk's 15-year struggle to come up with the money to get it done is an amazing story. It shows what a single woman can do on her own. The Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design shows Soviet-era items. People hate anything with a Soviet ideology, but I think that they should look at it just from a design, not a political, viewpoint. A glass is a glass; it doesn't matter if it's from Soviet times.

One of the joys of old European cities is how walkable they are. What route takes in what you love about Tallinn?

Follow the old fortress walls, enter the towers where you can, and then exit to walk along a park, like Snelli Park. This gives you an extreme spatial experience. First, you are squeezed between walls and the city, and then you exit and you're free. You have two completely different atmospheres. When you're pressed against the wall, you're really at the edge of the city. It's fragile being on the periphery. ▸

Snelli Park (top left), one of a necklace of lawns beside the old battlements, offers year-round recreation, whether ice-skating on the moat or picnicking on the grass.

Kunstihoone Art Hall (top right) is a center for avant-garde art, which it displays in a flowing gallery space replete with an illuminated glass ceiling.

The students at the Estonian Academy of Arts (bottom right), an influential design force, readily interact with the public, who can view their works in the lobby. ❶

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1. Rotermann Quarter — at the cross streets of Mere and Narva Ahtri

2. Kultuurikatel — Pohja Road 27 A & B

3. Reet Aus — Müürivahe 19, reetaus.ee

4. Stereo — Harju 6, stereolounge.ee

5. Harjumägi — Komendandi, adjacent to St. Nicholas Church

6. Kumu Art Museum — Weizenbergi 34, ekm.ee/kumu

7. Puppet Theater (Eesti Nukuteater) — Lai 1/3, nukuteater.ee

8. Sushi House — Rataskaevu 16, sushihouse.ee

9. Snelli Park — Toompuistee, bastion belt greenery west of the Old Town

10. Tallinn Synagogue — 16 Karu, ejc.ee

11. Elevant — Vene 5, Avatud E-P 12-23, elevant.ee

12. Kunstihoone — Vabaduse väljak 6, kunstihoone.ee

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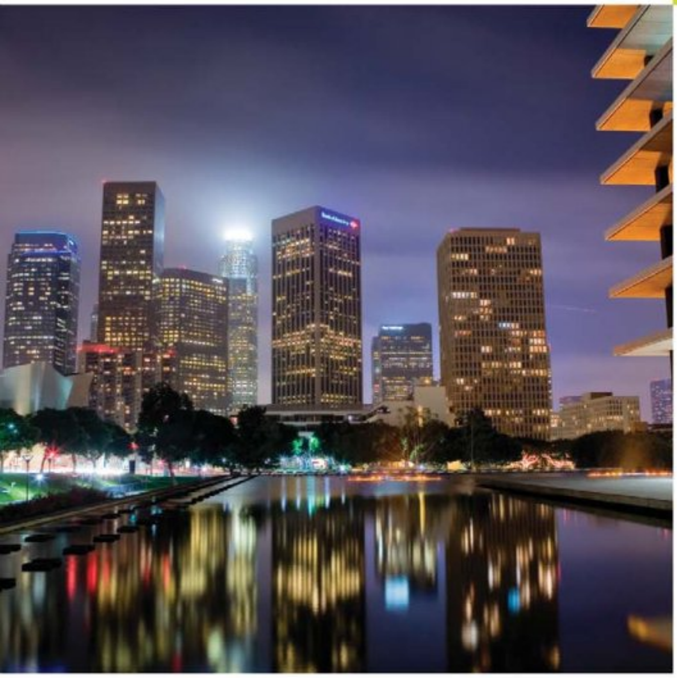

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Heart of the Country

Story by Sarah Rich

Urban planners have long upheld the ideal of dense, bustling cities with easy access to the pleasures of the countryside and a balanced interchange of urban and rural life. In his utopian 1956 proposal for the Illinois building, Frank Lloyd Wright imagined an entire metropolis packed into a skyscraper, a "mile-high city"—528 stories of residences, shopping, cultural facilities, and office space to accommodate 130,000 people "in spacious comfort"—with the open Midwestern flatlands stretching out in all directions.

Naturally this idea had little traction in the reality of mid-century development. The true physical links between city and country are concentric rings of suburbs—a middle distance of middle density, neither truly urban nor properly rural. The distance is more often bridged remotely, through the meandering diffusion of news and popular culture, than by people themselves. If only there were a bullet train to Yellowstone National Park.

Yet the connections, both physical and cultural, are strengthening. Green roofs and fire-escape gardens have taken hold in Los Angeles. The largest contemporary art museum in New England—MASS MoCA—isn't in Boston or Providence, Rhode Island, but in the sleepy mill town of North Adams, Massachusetts. What was once found within the bounds of a city is now springing up in the country, and vice versa.

Today, this exchange can often be found in architecture. Though modernism was born largely from the promise of mechanization, industrialization, and the speed of the machine age, many contemporary modern architects—armed with the technological tools that have built so many cities—are now taking farmhouses and silos as their points of reference.

In this issue we visit a couple in Iowa sowing the seeds of a working farm around their modern farmhouse, a French architect testing the waters of rural simplicity in his off-the-grid Normandy hideaway, and a pair of Chicago city slickers learning wetland restoration from a local agricultural club near their country home. While no designer can single-handedly close the widening suburban gap, these projects illuminate a flourishing urban-rural exchange wherein city architects embrace pastoral forms and lifelong urbanites learn to live off the fat of the land.

Rendering courtesy Harvard Graduate School of Design, Professor Allen Sayegh of Invivia, with Justin Chen and John Pugh

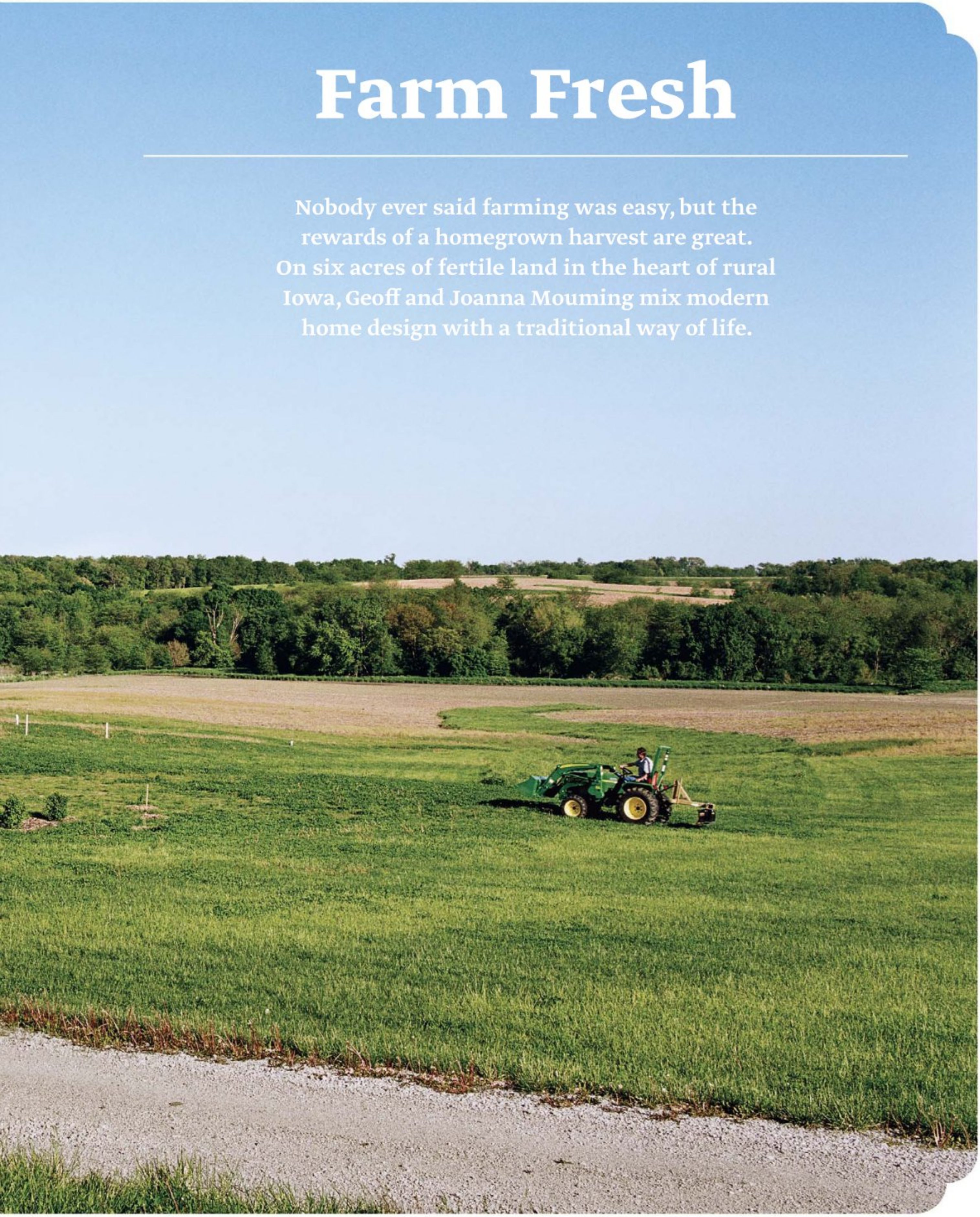
Geoff and Joanna Mouming's compact modern farmhouse is the first permanent structure at Yum Yum Farm in Wellman, Iowa. On the field that stretches out before it, organic vegetables will soon make attentive farmers of the Moumings. The benches on their entry porch were built by Geoff using a design plan by Aldo Leopold, the pioneering Iowa-born conservationist and writer whose spirit and thoughts seem to preside over the house.

Story by Georgina Gustin
Photos by Mark Mahaney

Project: Yum Yum Farm
Architect: John DeForest
Location: Wellman, Iowa

Farm Fresh

Nobody ever said farming was easy, but the rewards of a homegrown harvest are great. On six acres of fertile land in the heart of rural Iowa, Geoff and Joanna Mouming mix modern home design with a traditional way of life.



Before there was a house at Yum Yum Farm, there was a pair of yellow lawn chairs, a fire pit, and an old, worn picnic table, all parked on a sloping hillside.

Joanna and Geoff Mouming had scoured the countryside around Iowa City, looking for the right spot to build a modern incarnation of a farmhouse. When they finally found it—55 impossibly pastoral acres overlooking corn, soybeans, and barns in the far-off distance—they spent weekends there, camping, building fires, scanning the view from their chairs, and wondering, What next?

For more than two years, they hunted in Iowa City and beyond for an architect, but no one seemed quite right. Then, on a serendipitous visit to the Iowa City Public Library, Joanna overheard a librarian commenting on a book called *Good House Cheap House* that had just arrived. Joanna asked to see it. She flipped through the pages, liked what she saw, and called one of the featured architects, John DeForest, at his office in Seattle. "Joanna asked, 'Do you ever work in Iowa?'" DeForest remembers. "I said, 'I hardly know where Iowa is.'"

But something clicked. The Moumings quickly found themselves with an architect nearly 2,000 miles away, and DeForest found himself envisioning a house in the middle of an Iowa soybean field.

"John just had such good listening skills. Some architects go off on their own tangents," Joanna says. "Geoff was a little reluctant to work with someone in Seattle, but after our first conversation, we knew."

Several thousand frequent-flier miles and many Skype calls later, Yum Yum Farm—as the Moumings dubbed their land—has its farmhouse. Or, as Geoff says, it has "an abstraction of a farmhouse."

The Moumings met through friends in Iowa City and married on a farm about 14 miles east of where they eventually settled. Geoff, a fledgling organic farmer who runs a landscaping business, and Joanna, a devoted cook who is marketing director for a business that sells organic dairy foods, beef, and local produce, had developed a taste for modernism over the years. They wanted their house to blend modernist ideas with the agrarian Iowa landscape. ▸

At their dining table (below), the Moumings enjoy the fruits of Joanna's passion for cooking and Geoff's passion for growing. The kitchen cabinets with cutouts for handles (opposite) were designed by a local woodworker. The stairs lead to a loft office where Joanna works, perched beside a quilt made by her great-grandmother.

From the office (above left), a high window frames a view of the Moumings' fields. The slatted wall that divides the sleeping and living quarters (above right) has maple-ply boxed shelves that can be rearranged. A Blu Dot Buttercup rocker and armchair (left) sit next to the woodburning stove set on a limestone slab from Stone City, Iowa—a city famously captured by the painter Grant Wood, who grew up in that area.

"We like wooden ceilings. We like red. We like modern architecture," Geoff says. "But we wanted it to respect the context."

So first DeForest had to get a feel for what that context actually looked and felt like. As part of his extensive getting-to-know-you process, he asked the Moumings to complete "assignments," in which they responded to questions that revealed their inspirations and preferences. They wanted a place, he learned, where they could wake up to views and dance around listening to music. They wanted space that would spill into the outdoors. In answering the questions, the Moumings also introduced DeForest to Iowa. "He'd never been here," Joanna says. "We love Iowa, and just wanted him to appreciate it too."

So they sent him photos of barns and fields and a picture of a 1931 landscape painting by Iowan Grant Wood—most famous for his iconic portrait *American Gothic*—that reflected the undulating patchwork of their own land. All of this DeForest put up on a "storyboard" in his Seattle offices. "We got to know them on a much deeper level," DeForest says.

"It was important to establish the heart of the project before we got into the details."

Soon DeForest got on a plane to see Iowa for himself. The Moumings took him to their land, along winding roads and past Amish farms where the odd horse pulling a buggy clops along the roadside. The trio wandered around the property trying to figure out where to put the house. Finally, standing on top of the picnic table, they chose the spot.

The following spring, the Moumings broke ground. A friend from the Rotary Club had recommended a builder, and things took off from there. The Moumings chose local craftsmen to build the house, inside and out, so that it would be an extension of the community as well as the land. Chris Graber, an Amish carpenter, milled the Douglas fir for the floors, which was recovered from an old farmhouse. Woodworker Dan Feigenspan made the kitchen cabinets and other custom woodwork, like a roll-away serving cart that moves from the dining area to the kitchen to haul away dirty dishes after one of the Moumings' many dinner ▸

Cultivating the land keeps the Moumings in a frequent rotation in and out of the house. A Dutch door (right) lets indoor and outdoor tasks flow together easily as they go about their day (with Yuri the cat standing guard). A simple shower design using corrugated steel (below left) references farmhouses of old, while the custom kitchen cabinetry (below right) with its cutout pulls and geometric arrangement strikes a more modern chord.

"It was important to establish the heart of the project before we got into the details."

—John DeForest

gatherings. "It was a new process for everyone," Joanna says of the builders' foray into modernism, "but Iowa people are really honest, hardworking folks. John would come here and be blown away by the workmanship."

That level of craftsmanship yielded a structure that is as strong and enduring as any old farmhouse. And, in a place with a footprint of just 950 square feet, the deconstructed barnlike details are select, subtle, and essential.

The main floor is really one open space, with the bedroom separated from the living room by a slatted wall through which light crosses, sort of like a stall door. Corrugated metal lines the bathroom walls, and vapor-proof lamps light several areas throughout the house. An elevated space where Joanna works sits overhead like a kind of hayloft. The front door, made of solid maple, is a minimalist interpretation of a divided Dutch door. "It suggests an agrarian building," Geoff muses, "rather than being a cheesy copy or a Disney version."

For Joanna, the kitchen, with loads of storage and a view of Geoff's first farming efforts, was a major priority. "I still pinch myself that I get to cook here," she says. (Geoff jokes, "I grow, she cooks.")

But it's the openness—the sense of being connected to the land and to Iowa and its seasons—that the Moumings love most. A line of windows faces south, providing a view of the broad sweep of their property, which slopes down to a grove of trees, and the hills rising beyond, with hilltop farms miles away. One of the couple's primary forms of entertainment is staring at the view, watching birds in the wide-open sky and changes in the weather. On stormy summer nights, the couple can lie in bed and see lightning crack 30 miles away. (They hang Chilewich panels to block the light on really active nights.) In the winter, nature brings other offerings. "When the ground's covered in snow and the moon's full, it reflects all the light back into the house," Joanna says. "It's really beautiful."

The Moumings officially relocated from their Iowa City duplex to Yum Yum Farm on Christmas Eve 2007, just seven relatively snag-free months after they had broken ground. "It was a beautiful night; the moon was full," Joanna remembers. "We were up in the loft sticking our heads out the window."

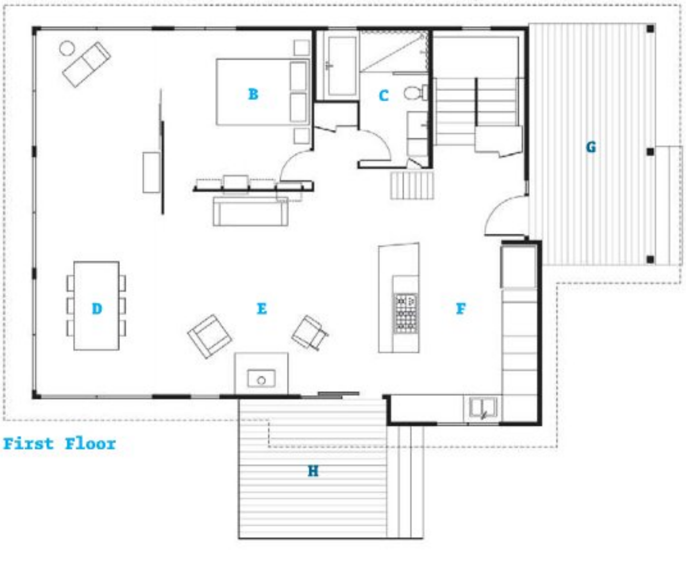
These days the Moumings are still besotted with the space they've created and talk about it almost dreamily. At the end of the day, they drive down their swoop of gravel driveway and pull up to the house, with its metal roof and barn-red walls. Geoff's John Deere 790 Compact tractor sits across from the porch. Sometimes the Moumings are met by one of their cats with a field mouse in his chops. "I love coming home," Geoff says. "I don't like leaving."

Joanna agrees. "It's so nice to live here," she says, looking out the window, "every day." With their burgeoning garden growing up into a real working farm, the Moumings' land really will demand daily care and attention. Fortunately, there's no place they'd rather be. ▮

Yum Yum Farm Floor Plans

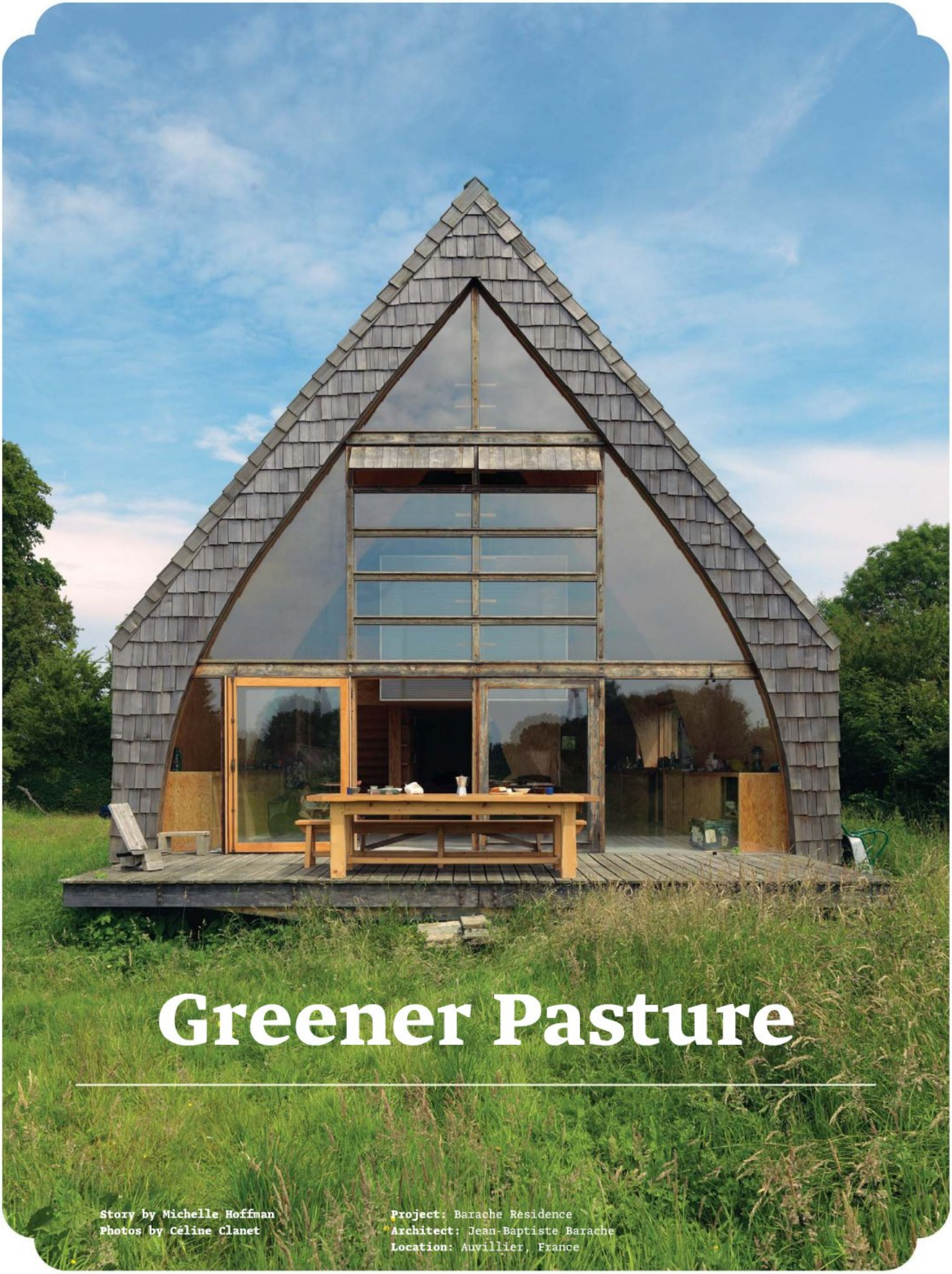
A Office
B Bedroom
C Bathroom
D Dining Area
E Living Area
F Kitchen
G Porch
H Deck

Second Floor



First Floor

Before the Moumings built their house, they camped out on their six acres while preparing the land for farming, planting grass and clover in place of soybean stubble. As the house arose from its foundation, soil-fixing plants grew from seed. Now the couple can focus on growing food.


Greener Pasture
Story by Michelle Hoffman
Photos by Céline Clanet
Project: Barache Residence
Architect: Jean-Baptiste Barache
Location: Auvillier, France

"I didn't want the kind of manicured garden that would mean I'd have to come out on weekends and mow the lawn," says Jean-Baptiste Barache of the country home he built, mostly by himself, over a year and a half. The result: a house that looks like it's just been dropped into a field, casual, with nary a path leading up to it and a front door that can barely be detected on the red-cedar-shingled facade.

Like a little chapel on the prairie, architect Jean-Baptiste Barache's simply elegant retreat in the tiny Normandy town of Auvillier is a modern play on centuries-old forms and technology.

Damp Upper Normandy, a workingman's land of ragged rains and rapeseed fields, is not the first place that comes to mind for an exercise in off-the-grid living. This isn't the Normandy of well-heeled Parisian weekenders and American cineasts who flock to nearby seaside resorts, with their saltwater spas, annual film festival, and champagne brunches. It's a farming land dotted by modest prefab commuter clusters, rusty grain silos, and cows of the white, tawny, and Rorschach varieties. The climate is intemperate; winters are long, summers fickle. But it is exactly what Jean-Baptiste Barache was looking for to undertake this experiment: to elaborate on an architecture seeking to integrate us with, not isolate us from, the elements.

"Constraints nourish a project," he says. And if that's the case, it's been a feast for the architect, whose home forgoes electricity altogether.

"I had no need for a country house," the architect remembers. "I felt the desire for countryside but no desire for private property." The mere notion of land ownership disturbs Barache: "It upsets one's tranquility," he says. But the pull of a project to call his own was enough to bend those principles. It was 2005, and he was working on naval and floating architecture while secretly dreaming of dry land. So he quit his job and went to work for the only client he knew who would take on such a novice to build a house: himself.

Barache bought a semi-enclosed, hoof-trodden field in Auvilliers, a mere stop sign of a village two hours northwest of Paris. With financing from his brother and his own savings, he paid a local barn builder to throw up a wooden frame. He collected lumber recycled from theater sets, red cedar shingles for the exteriors, and cheap veneer and particleboard for the rest. And then he rolled up his sleeves and got to work. The result—18 months of DIY efforts and $105,000 later—is a house dropped onto the field. It would be a stretch to call the terrain undergroomed, as it looks like the herd only recently vacated the premises.

This aesthetic was carried over to the house, which is the antithesis of a manicured country home. If anything, the house's debt is to the iconic forms of the French countryside. Its A-frame ⊪

Like the barns Barache scampered through as a child, the house divides its length between loftlike open spaces like the living room, which opens onto a small deck perfect for open-air lolling (opposite), and stacked-box nooks and crannies. Cubic bookshelves do double duty as a dividing wall (bottom right) and as a sliding door opening up to a hidden bath (bottom left).

In his kitchen built on the cheap, Barache installed appliances donated by a few architectural Good Samaritans. "I don't even remember where the sink is from," he says. Two built-in sliding-door cabinets house the kitchen basics, and the custom-built dining set, a modern riff on the farmers' table and benches, is large enough to welcome family and visitors dropping in for a meal.

construction—a requirement imposed by the local architectural authority—is so steep it seems a visual quote of the chapels that anchor even the tiniest village. It recalls, too, the barns Barache played in during his childhood, when his parents, acting out the last of the countercultural post-1968 moment, moved to the rural southwest. "Those spots bring up a lot of emotion for me," he says, "very large spaces, with very small niches carved out in them."

In Auvilliers that open space is translated inside by a voluminous living room that stretches 25 feet to the roof and across the width of the house, fronted by a glass facade that looks south onto a deck and the fields beyond. The nooks and crannies in the upstairs sleeping area are equally capacious; the whole room is one giant box of a space where *lits bretons*—cupboardlike beds that can be closed off with a curtain—line the walls. They exude an air of collective coziness, like children at a slumber party wrapped up after a day of communal play.

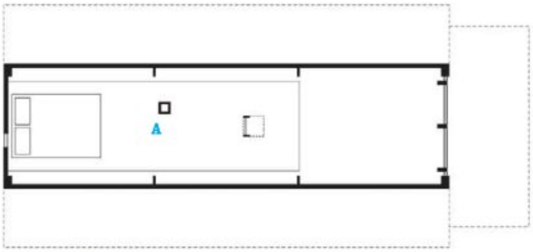
There's even a kind of barnyard swing—a thick pulley rope that hangs from the ceiling, officially used for scampering up to the roof for repairs, but unofficially (and far more frequently) for allowing Barache's nephew and niece, who visit the house often, to propel themselves across the room. It's a compact place as a whole—just under 2,000 square feet for two floors and a sleeping loft near the rafters—with equal doses of childhood nostalgia and grown-up philosophy.

Going without electricity doesn't mean forgoing power, but it does cast daily life in a much simpler mold. A gas canister fuels the simple stovetop in the kitchen; a homemade wood-burning stove diffuses heat through the house in a slow, steady burn. And come twilight, Barache and his wife, Mie, light the wicks on the oil lamps and watch the flames flicker. "I was very moved by Junichiro Tanizaki's book *In Praise of Shadows* when I was designing this," the architect admits. "I love the light of a flame creating shadows. It's a very Japanese notion, beauty that does not reveal itself."

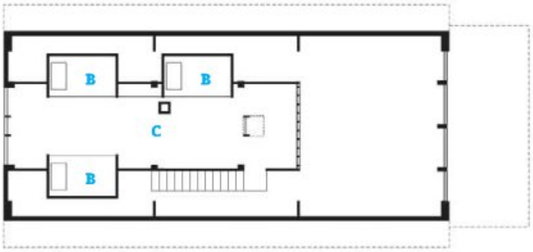
Climatically open living makes the Auvilliers house open to extremes, not only of light and dark but also of hot and cold. The cleverly designed stove delivers heat from the kitchen up to the compact ▸

Barache Residence
Floor Plans

A Bedroom
B Lit Breton
C Common Area
D Kitchen/Dining Area
E Bathroom
F Living Area
G Deck



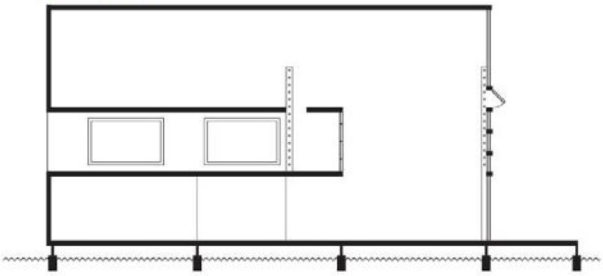
Third Floor

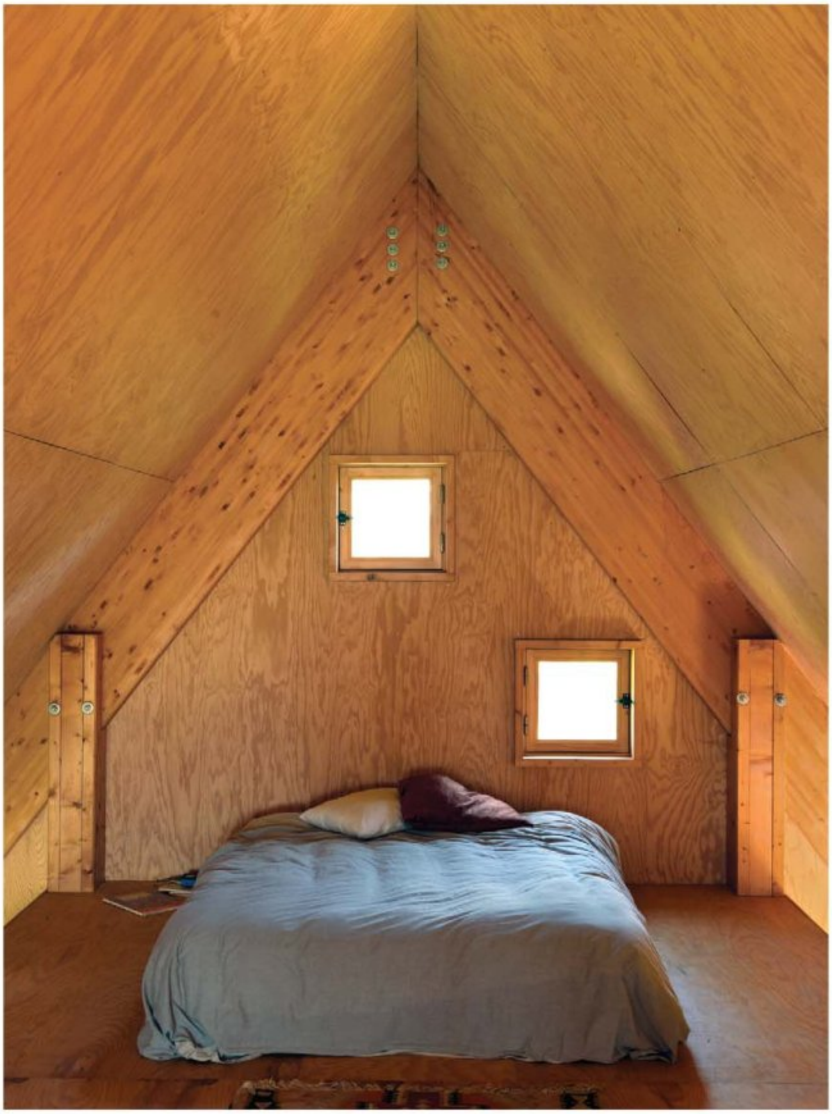


Second Floor

First Floor

Elevation





In the third-floor bedroom (top), peekaboo windows offer a glimpse of the surrounding fields. The second floor houses three lits bretons (left), boxlike compartments where the curtains can be drawn to close sleepers off from the world. Inside, each has a built-in shelf for personal belongings and a favorite read.

A series of horizontal window panes on the rear facade (left) serves as vanes for ventilation and adds a craftsmanlike design come nightfall, when the house is lit up by the flicker of candlelight and gas lamps. The front door (opposite) dissolves into the facade. The exposed-wood motif continues inside (bottom, right), where plywood walls, as well as Barache and his guests, keep things warm.

sleeping quarters through a clay brick chimney, but still the Normandy chill manages to seep in for much of the year. Even that, unpleasant as it may be, makes sense to Barache. "My memories of the countryside are of houses that are cold in winter, and in the summer, hot. It's not unpleasant to actually experience the seasons."

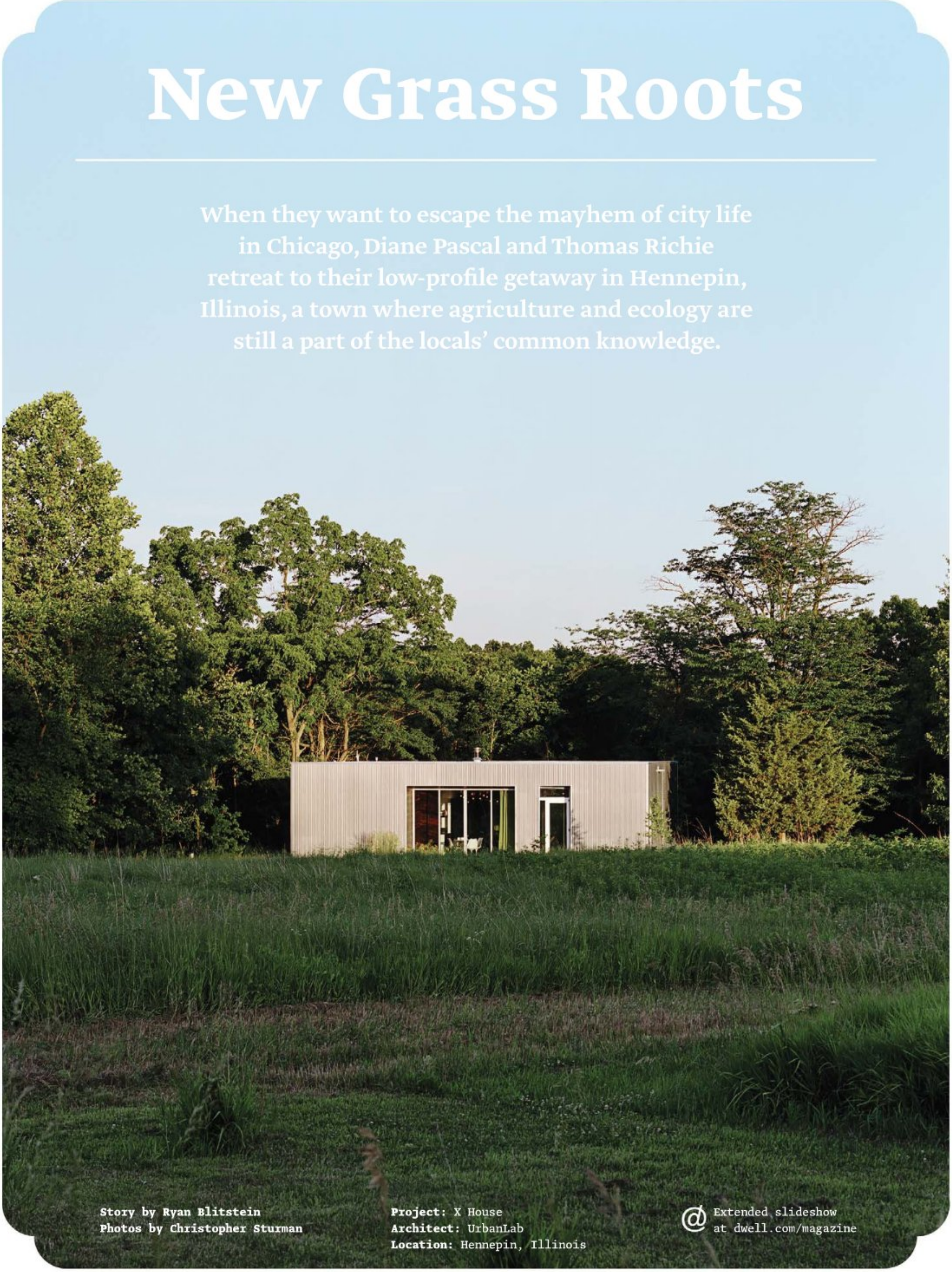
It's what Barache refers to as his own notion of bioclimatic architecture. Rather than building up (read: insulating) against the environment, he seeks to take stock of, and adapt to, its changes. "It seems that I make low-tech homes, a bit like old country houses. They just work on their own." It's a concept born in the barns, but encouraged, too, by trips to Japan, where Mie comes from, and where Barache discovered the old wooden houses with their delicate walls and spare interiors seemingly permeable to the elements. His first commissions for private homes have gone even further along those lines: One house in the often-inclement Burgundy region uses Japanese shoji screens for its exteriors; another has walls that rise like insect wings into the air, leaving rooms buffered by crosswinds.

But despite his happiness with the house, Barache feels like a victim of a mistaken identity. Off-the-grid living has its own coterie of followers, from hard-core environmentalists to conspiracy-theorist energy-independence types. "I think there's been a bit of a misunderstanding," he says. "People think I'm an environmentalist, but this is not an ecological approach. It's not a dogma; it's an experiment."

There's not much the couple misses about electricity in Auvilliers, though the area does lack other things they need—good Japanese food and the honk and grind of their urban Parisian beat. They have no desire to leave city life permanently, no landed-gentry fantasies. But with the surprise that has come of owning property and actually enjoying it, the duo are finding themselves increasingly drawn to its repose. The biggest concession Barache now plans to make is to the needs of his laptop computer. A solar-powered battery will extend his stays at the house and permit him to do a bit of work now and again. But more importantly there will be more time to contemplate the play of light and shadow, the stirrings of a land free from the hum of electricity.

New Grass Roots

When they want to escape the mayhem of city life in Chicago, Diane Pascal and Thomas Richie retreat to their low-profile getaway in Hennepin, Illinois, a town where agriculture and ecology are still a part of the locals' common knowledge.



Story by Ryan Blitstein
Photos by Christopher Sturman

Project: X House
Architect: UrbanLab
Location: Hennepin, Illinois

@ Extended slideshow at dwell.com/magazine

Pascal and Richie enjoy the view from their boiled-wool Ligne Roset couch in the main living area, where wood paneling on the ceiling and walls mirrors the topography of the landscape. The corrugated-aluminum-clad house (opposite), on the border between open prairie and lush woodland, was designed to resemble rural silos or sheds.

Diane Pascal and Thomas Richie don't quite blend in. When they venture to the farmers' market from their weekend home in Hennepin, Illinois, vendors often ask where they're from. "There aren't a lot of Volvo station wagons around here," says Pascal. Unlike most weekend visitors to the area, they're not recreational hunters, and they don't ride ATVs out to visit their neighbors.

But Hennepin, a small Illinois River town about 100 miles southwest of Chicago with a population of 707, is exactly the sort of place Pascal and her husband were searching for in 2004, when they began scouting a spot to build. Spurning trendy summer outposts like the Lake Michigan shores, they chose Hennepin, where you're more likely to pass a coal plant worker on the street than a vacationing CEO.

Richie, a freelance advertising creative director, and Pascal, the development officer for an organization serving homeless people, maintain a sense of humor about their city-slickerdom. They are determined to learn about the environment they've adopted, from the lovely purple flowers blooming in their prairie backyard (Pascal wishes she knew the name) to the tall, kelly green crops grown by their farmer neighbors (Richie thinks it's switchgrass, but he's not sure). "I wonder if people moving from country to city feel as clueless as I do," Pascal jokes.

Back-to-the-land hippies they're not: X House is filled with the trappings of a modern metropolitan existence—a red retro kitchen clock, a Fireorb in the living room, concrete bedroom floors. Inside and out, though, the home manages to disappear into the rural landscape, thanks to considered treatment of the building's proportions.

Designed to fit the owners' tight budget and concerns about their ecological footprint, the house

The rear of the main room (above) features floor-to-ceiling glass panels that frame a view of a shortgrass prairie and the woods behind the house. A suspended Fireorb echoes the vertical line of the trees. A Saarinen dining table and Tulip chairs for Knoll sit in the front of the same room (right), with a wide view to the prairie on the other side of the house.

is just 1,600 square feet, but it feels much larger. The home is situated on 14 acres of Midwestern prairie and woodland, where the ambient noise sounds like a new-age relaxation CD: chirping birds, light wind, buzzing insects, and a babbling creek. So it's ironic that Pascal and Richie chose UrbanLab, the boutique firm founded by husband-and-wife duo Martin Felsen and Sarah Dunn, to design their place. Felsen and Dunn, both professors of architecture, are widely regarded as two of Chicago's hottest young designers for a body of work located primarily within the bounds of the city. Indeed, Felsen admits he'd probably buy a place in the Sears Tower before he'd build a house for himself in the country.

That urban-rural tension, however, was crucial to innovations that helped position the design between classic and cutting-edge. Though Dunn led the project, it was a collaboration: She and Richie were the dreamers, suggesting ideas far out of their price range; Felsen and Pascal were the realists, steering their spouses toward what made fiscal and logistical sense. The architects spent months creating prototypes. "They would've kept designing indefinitely if we hadn't stopped them," says Pascal.

Dunn's final concept placed the house on the boundary between two natural territories, in a sort of "X marks the spot" configuration. The central living space is located at the intersection point of the X, which resembles a pair of funnel cones placed end to end. The walls spread out to create panoramic views of woodlands to the south and prairie to the north, like a pair of frameless landscape paintings. Knotty pine, chosen for its graphic quality, covers the room from floor to ceiling, with the orientation of the slats modeled on the property's topographic lines. It lends the space the feeling of a roomy sauna, though substantial airflow keeps it cool.

To the east and west, camouflaged behind sliding wooden doors, are what Dunn calls the "quiet zones." The master bedroom and bathroom sit on one side of the house, while a guest wing, which comprises a bedroom and bathroom, plus a small office/living area, occupies the other. These zones are radically different from the main room, resembling modern urban apartments.

The kitchen is open, simple, and small. It's mostly functional, with a few clever touches, such as an extra-tall stainless steel backsplash and a random polka-dot arrangement of compact fluorescent lamp bulbs on the ceiling.

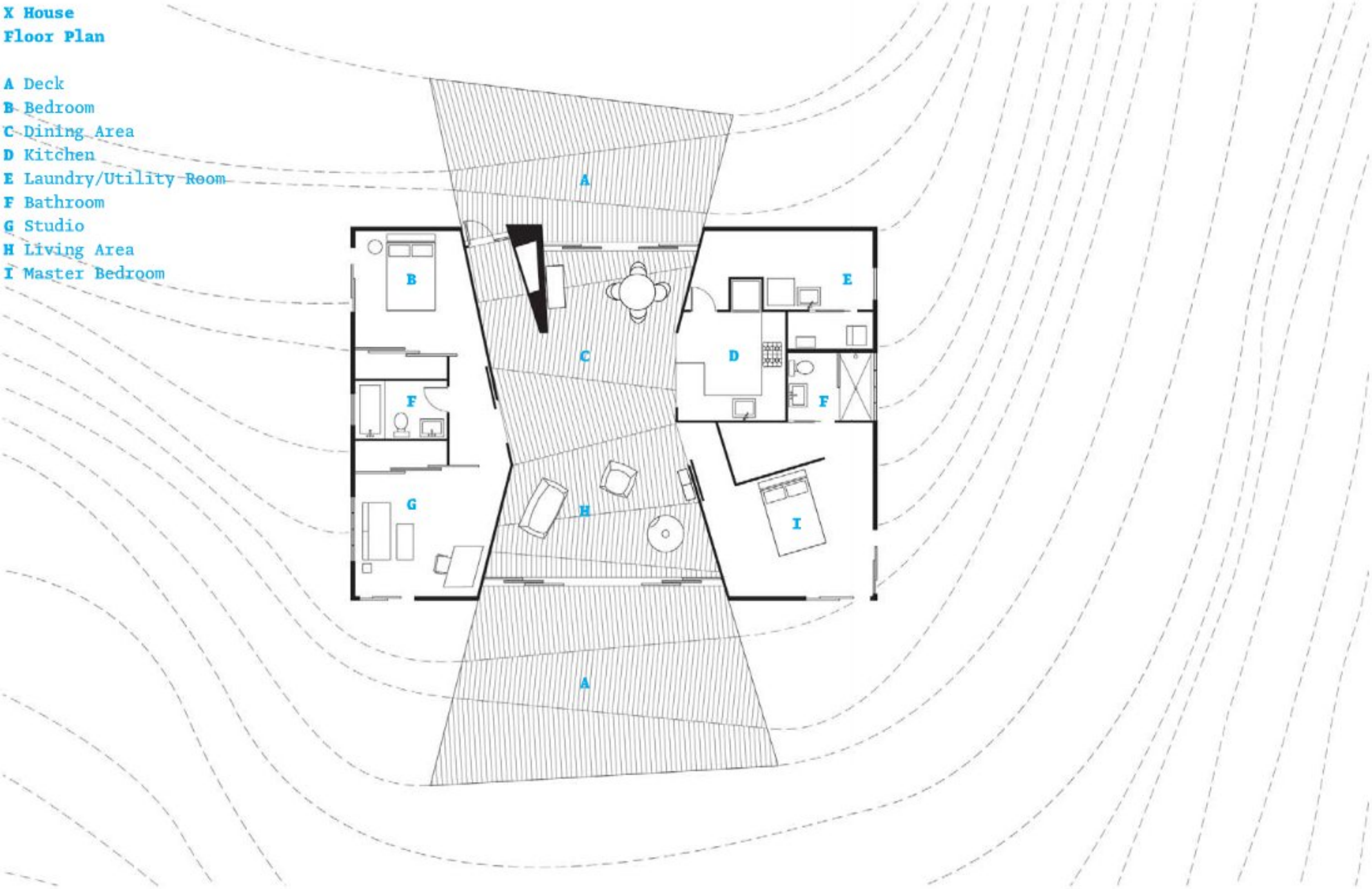
Elsewhere, Pascal and Richie opted for custom creations: When they couldn't find light fixtures they liked for the living room, Felsen, whose father owned a lighting company, designed overhead lights that evoke a computer circuit board. A metalsmith fabricated the steel, and then Felsen and UrbanLab staffer Lee Greenberg wired them. To limit costs, Richie scoured the Internet and Chicago boutiques for original fixtures and furniture, such as the Keuco-made clean-white-block bathroom vanities. The walls are filled with photographs and faux-advertisement prints by Richie and other friends. ►

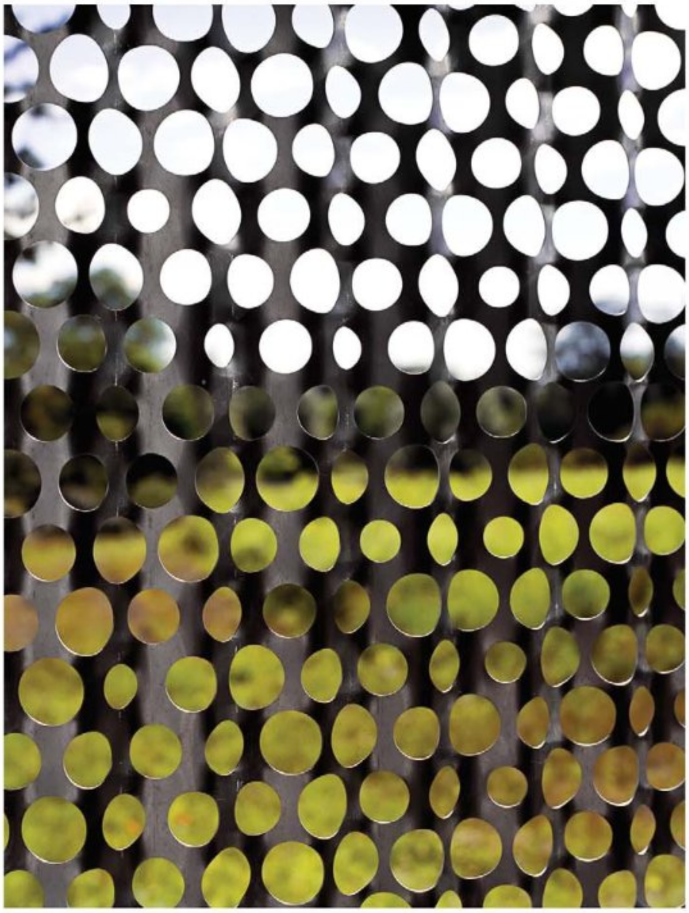
The wooden doors in the living room (right) practically vanish when closed. Sliding them open reveals modern bedroom suites in a lighter, brighter palette. The kitchen (below) was left open so Pascal and Richie wouldn't be cut off from guests while they cook during dinner parties. The slick-surfaced cooking area contrasts with the more textured and rustic appearance of the main living space.

A close-up of the sliding door track (left) shows the industrial detail of the recessed hardware. UrbanLab designed the circuit board–like lighting fixtures (opposite, top left) in the living area. In the kitchen (opposite, top right) compact fluorescent lightbulbs affixed to the ceiling are a simple solution. In the bathroom (opposite, bottom right), perforated-metal screens create a pointillist perspective on the landscape.

X House Floor Plan

A Deck
B Bedroom
C Dining Area
D Kitchen
E Laundry/Utility Room
F Bathroom
G Studio
H Living Area
I Master Bedroom





Richie feared that this modern house on the prairie might eventually find itself outdated. From the road, though, the corrugated-aluminum structure doesn't seem out of place. It's reminiscent of the farm buildings that dot the landscape. When the couple moved in, the movers drove past the home twice, stopping only after Pascal flagged them down.

But the natural and full-grown state of the surrounding land is intentional. Pascal and Richie have been managing their acreage primarily on their own based on the overall outdoor plan devised by UrbanLab and landscape architect Chandra Goldsmith. The couple, who admit little prior knowledge of country living, are learning as they go. A Putnam County High School teacher brings kids from FFA (an agricultural education organization founded as Future Farmers of America) to get some hands-on science education by maintaining 1.5 acres that have been restored into a natural prairie habitat. They worked with a forester to develop a land management plan for 12 acres of forest, placing it under the Federal Conservation Reserve Program.

Now that they've become familiar with their new habitat, Pascal and Richie can't help but resist the prospect of other buyers following them out to Hennepin. Richie's native Acworth, Georgia, a once-rural Atlanta suburb where cows sometimes roamed into his yard, lost its small-town feel when that metropolitan area exploded. Already, Chicago's sprawl has gobbled up the towns halfway down the highway to Hennepin. Though the couple knows that increased foot traffic would benefit local business, they nevertheless hope that other city dwellers will be slow to discover the town they treasure as their own little secret. "I feel selfish when I say it," Richie says, "but I don't want anything to change."

The front deck (above), invisible from the road, is an extension of the wood paneling in the main living space. A small room in the guest wing (left) doubles as a lounge and studio, with a table designed by Richie and a Case Study daybed from Modernica. In the closet (right) sticklike wall hooks continue the rural motif. In the master bedroom (opposite), the same perforated material that was used in the bathroom gives a sense of sunlight filtering through leaves.

First-Class Cabins

From the familiar log model to Swiss chalets and Swedish *friggebods*, cabins are the simplest of structures, made from local materials in forms that respond to climatic and cultural needs.

However, these no-frills wilderness escapes no longer require giving up modern comforts and aesthetics. Today's cabins synthesize traditional typology with present-day design know-how and allow architectural explorations in a way traditional homes rarely do. Here we highlight five modern retreats that might give you cabin fever of a different sort.

Photos by Tom Bies

Story by Miyoko Ohtake
and Jordan Kushins

Salt Spring Island Cabin

Architect: Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects
Location: Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

Cabins are an integral part of Canadian culture. Spending summers on a dock or in the woods is a rite of passage for our neighbors to the north, who even mark the return of warmer weather with an unofficial but widely celebrated weekend holiday (May Two-Four) to kick off cottage season.

On a four-acre site on Salt Spring Island, just southwest of Vancouver, Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects crafted a cabin—modest in size yet bold in design—on the site where another cottage once stood. Inside the walls of rammed earth and steel, the 191-square-foot space is a cozy nook warmed by the caramel colors of the cedar on the floor and ceiling, which was milled from salvaged timbers, as well as the heat produced by the wood-burning stove. "The small size creates an intimate, protected refuge within a larger landscape," architect Tom Kundig says. "It forces you to engage with the bigger landscape yet still provides a sanctuary from the elements."

The cabin's owner lives in Seattle, but she remains true to her Canadian roots, spending every other weekend in the summer (and one weekend a month in the winter) at her cottage. The unfinished steel cladding that slides over the cabin's wall of windows like a shutter makes for easy openings and closings; each time a reason to head to the Beer Store for a 24-pack of Molson Canadian.

Wooden Cabin

Architect: Group8
Location: Vollèges, Switzerland

For Group8 architects, designing the Wooden Cabin was a matter of achieving a balance between convention and innovation—resulting in a traditional Swiss chalet with a modern aesthetic. Principal architect François de Marignac kept the classic gabled roof, wide overhang, and open-plan interior while forgoing decorative exterior carpentry in favor of thick, flat walls to weather the heavy winter snows and year-round winds. Composed entirely of locally sourced larch, the honey-colored Wooden Cabin will in time turn gray, then black, blending in with the older constructions nestled nearby on the Alpine valley mountainside.

Photos by David Gagnebin-de Bons and Benoît Pointet / DGBP

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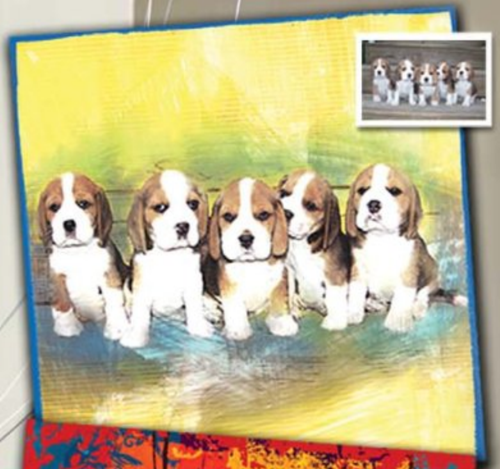

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Georgian Bay Cottage

Architect: Leo Mieles Architect
Location: Christian Island, Ontario

The Georgian Bay Cottage treads lightly on the land—as the natives whose reservation this cabin is built on once did. Because the lots are leased, architect Leo Mieles explains, "the approach is: 'Let's not clear the hell out of the land but instead quietly embed our cottage and enjoy the landscape.'" This attitude prompts residents to distill their desires to the basic elements needed to escape from the city and relax in nature. Here, the solution is a "long-shed" construction featuring a large sliding door and pull-down bug screen, a translucent corrugated-fiberglass roof, and exposed studs and ties.

Mini House

Architect: Jonas Wagell Design and Architecture
Location: Katrineholm, Sweden

Prefabricated, flat-packed, and put together on-site with a little love and elbow grease, the Mini House is a modern Swedish shed (or *friggebod*) that reimagines architecture as product. Conceived by Jonas Wagell for his master's thesis at the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts, and Design in Stockholm, the small structure's simple, livable design lacks a kitchen or bath, although those—along with a sauna or solar-power system—can be added on as modular units.

Photos by Leo Mieles (Georgian Bay), Andy Liffner (Mini)

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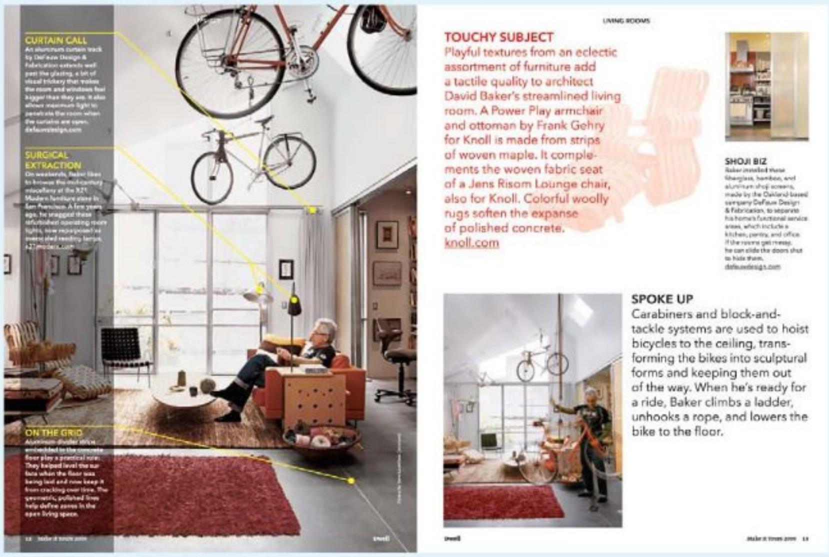

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Cabin Vardehaugen

Architect: Fantastic Norway Architects
Location: Vardehaugen, Norway

At the mouth of a fjord on the Fosen peninsula in Norway, form followed function to a small rocky outcrop called Vardehaugen. There, Fantastic Norway Architects constructed Cabin Vardehaugen atop the exposed, wind-whipped hill. The holiday haven—shaped like "a mountain fox curled up to avoid the wind," says lead architect Håkon Matre Aasarød—took its structural cues from the environment. In addition, the careful composition had to respect both the unfettered panorama and strict local building regulations set in place to preserve the landscape's purity. "Our dramatic nature is something truly unique and special to our country," Aasarød says. "But even though this fascination with nature is a romantic idea, the Norwegian building tradition is rather pragmatic, without ornamentation." ▸

Photos by Håkon Matre Aasarød

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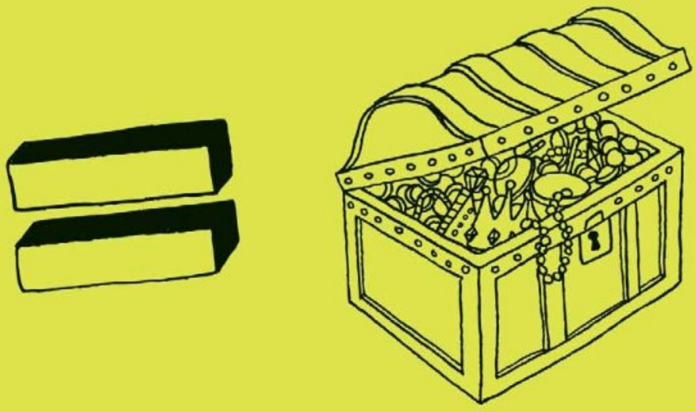

Illustrations © Damien Weighill (2009) with kind permission of Blast Design Ltd and Conqueror.

An angled roof and sloping walls help direct wind away from the cabin's small outdoor enclave, protecting the porches from the elements. Steel rods secure the cabin directly to the solid bedrock below.

Photos by Håkon Mattre Aasarød

COLLECTION: MOCA'S FIRST THIRTY YEARS

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Going Dutch

Though some might say that you can't buy good taste, Cok de Rooy has built a career out of doing just that. He refined his design sensibilities as a buyer for big brands like Liberty of London, and in 1992, he and his business partner, Dick Dankers, opened the Frozen Fountain in Amsterdam. Today the Dutch design shop is renowned for showcasing both homegrown and international talents, hosting twice-yearly exhibitions, and rotating original art and prototypes among its curated wares for purchase.

1

What's best about your job?
The most fun element for me is meeting and talking with young designers. The new generation is very optimistic—yet serious and well aware of their talents—and always thinking about inventing new solutions for the future.

What makes you wish you did something else?
Nothing. In another life, I think I'd want to be an architect, playing with space, material, and balance. But now, this is exactly what I want to do.

How do you define "good design"?
A well-designed item communicates precisely what it was made for. Good designers and artists must be original, curious, and autonomous.

What's your most recent purchase?
A small black-and-white photo of a bottle, teapot, and saucer. It's marvelous: completely quiet and very tasteful.

2

Is there anything you are embarrassed to love?
My girlfriend once bought a little statue of Marilyn Monroe for a dollar from a market in Italy. It was 100 percent kitsch, and I thought, My goodness. Then it broke, and I found myself spending a whole evening gluing it back together. It was so funny, back from a thousand pieces. I loved it.

3

Is there an object that changed how you think about design?
I'm not a designer, and I'm not an artist. When those creative types show me things, I'm always surprised. I always enjoy looking at new work. So it's quite abstract, in a way, what has influenced me.

What are you currently longing for?
That life stays as it is. ▮

4

Photos by Alex Subrizi (chair), courtesy the Frozen Fountain (interior, plate, china set)

Story by Jordan Kushins
Portrait by Alex Subrizi

1. Furniture from Nani Marquina, Vitra, Piet Hein Eek, and Foscarini.
2. Grandmother's Treasures Tea Set by Vika Mitrachenka for the Frozen Fountain.
3. Shippolady by Hella Jongerius for Cïbone Collection.
4. High Gloss Lacquered Oakwood Chair in Scrapwood by Piet Hein Eek.

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Sunday Styles

When the Unitarian Church in Westport, Connecticut, asked Victor Lundy to design its first church building, he imagined a pair of hands in prayer. Pressed together they represent submission, but when pulled apart in a pose of questioning, they let the light through. Parishioners arrived at their finished church in 1965 to find it capped by twin roofs that rise on either side of the altar and reach toward the sky in parallel pinnacles that never meet. Sunlight illuminates the sanctuary through a well-placed skylight. The spires, Lundy said, represent the "open question" at the heart of Unitarian Universalism, a denomination that has shed the dogma of its Christian roots in favor of an ecumenical search for meaning without ever espousing a singular truth.

For a small denomination that sits proudly on the left fringe of American religious communities, Unitarian Universalism boasts a surprisingly impressive roster of churches by major modern architects. Though tradition generally looms large in religious building, many Unitarian Universalist congregations have embraced a design approach in line with their progressive temperament. In modern architecture they found an affinity of style and worldview, and subsequently sought out architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Kahn, Paul Rudolph, and Edward Durell Stone. Looking for designs that are less high altars of worship than spiritual gathering places, the congregations have found that the flexibility of modern design meets their preference for ambiguity over absolutes and humanism over hellfire.

Historically, much of the world's important and lasting architecture has been religious—from Greek temples to European cathedrals. The awe inspired by their marble masses and soaring vaults was located somewhere between the sheer power of God and the possibilities of man working in his service. Though today's celebrity architects focus on high-profile museums and concert halls (our places of secular devotion), for millennia creating sacred space was architecture's principal concern.

In most religious buildings, architectural boundaries have been established by centuries of tradition. Cathedrals from Notre Dame to Westminster may reflect different styles and ornamentation, but their plans are nearly always based on the axis of a cross. Mosques face Mecca and share the common spire of the minaret, and synagogues around the world are pointed toward Jerusalem. But as a denomination, Unitarian Universalism offers architects freedom: It has no creed (not even central agreement on belief in God) and emphasizes diversity and equality in beliefs and backgrounds. Many congregations have found that by breaking from the traditional ecclesiastical blueprint, the very notion of sacred space could be redefined as well.

Unitarian Universalism has its roots in New England Puritanism, though the two sects—Unitarians and Universalists merged in the 1950s and 1960s—quickly rejected established Christian orthodoxies like original sin and the holy trinity. As Unitarian and Universalist congregations expanded throughout the country in the 19th century, they turned their focus away from the hereafter and distinctly toward the present. While holy rollers preached damnation at tent revivals across the land, Unitarians and Universalists tucked into the good work of abolishing slavery and promoting women's suffrage. When it came time to build, they embraced the styles of the day.

Free from the burden of tradition, Unitarian and Universalist congregations felt no need to mimic ecclesiastical architecture of the past. Gilded Age architect Frank Furness designed a new building for the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, where his father had been a legendary abolitionist minister for 50 years, which was completed in 1886. A.C. Schweinfurth designed a rustic turn-of-the-century gabled wooden church in Berkeley, California, and H. H. Richardson's church in Springfield, Massachusetts, was built in his typical Richardson Romanesque style.

In 1905 the Universalist congregation in Oak Park, Illinois, commissioned local iconoclast Frank Lloyd Wright—a Unitarian himself—to design a new church after theirs ▸

Story by Drew Himmelstein
Illustrations by Camille Rousseau

Victor Lundy's Unitarian Church in Westport, Connecticut, nicknamed the New Ship Church, is a nod to the 1681 Old Ship Church in Hingham, Massachusetts.

burned down. Wright set out to create a structure that, as he put it, would embody "the principles of liberal religion for which this church stands...unity, truth, beauty, simplicity, freedom, and reason." Rather than steeples reaching for the heavens, Wright created a closed, intimate space whose squat, earthbound configuration invites human connection.

The square room's nine different seating areas face each other, and with no pew more than 40 feet from the pulpit, Wright engineered an intimacy between clergy and congregation. "This is symbolic of the theology of our tradition, wherein the minister is called out of the congregation as a part of it and not placed in it from the outside," says retired architect and Unitarian Universalist minister William Haney. Alan Taylor, the congregation's senior minister calls the church, known as Unity Temple, "a container for worship." "There's a sense of the divine or God coming into the space, rather than the space trying to reach up for God," he says.

In the 1950s and 1960s, as the Unitarians and Universalists merged into their current unified form and many of their parishioners moved to the suburbs, a number of congregations sold their urban properties and followed suit. Architecturally minded and flush with cash, Unitarian Universalism underwent something of a small building boom. Paul Rudolph was commissioned to design a new building for First Church in Boston (a congregation then 338 years old, originally chartered by colonial governor John Winthrop); Pietro Belluschi set to work on a church in Rockford, Illinois; Edward Durell Stone built one in Schenectady, New York; Alexander Girard designed a wood-mosaic mural for a church in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Louis Kahn designed a church in Rochester, New York.

The original meeting houses of the 17th century had a spare, functional quality that found easy expression in modernism's stripped-down aesthetics. A battery of new churches built on the congregational intimacy of the faith's roots were also expressions of

high modernism's desire for simplicity, open interiors, and hostility to gaudy ornamentation. Lundy's church in Westport—nicknamed the New Ship Church, after the sail-like shape of its swooping roofs—is possessed of just that sense of history and is a canny homage to the 1681 Old Ship Church of Hingham, Massachusetts—the oldest Unitarian Universalist meetinghouse in continuous use.

Another point of convergence was the embrace of the natural world. Modern architects who were eager to use natural materials and play with the relationship between indoors and out had a receptive audience in congregants who found spiritual inspiration in the natural world. "Nature often has an important theological position in many of our churches," says Haney. "We've inherited from Emerson and the Transcendentalists, and exposure to nature through clear glass rather than the mystery of stained glass has become an essential part of our architecture."

Modern architects also found ways to express the absence of hierarchy in the congregations for which they were building. Belluschi used movable chairs instead of pews for seating, emphasizing flexibility in use and renouncing the dogmatic positioning of the minister at the front preaching truth to those assembled. Kahn's Rochester church did the same thing.

Although much recent American religious architecture seems to have taken the Metrodome as its point of reference, Unitarian Universalist congregations continually look to high design to create their sacred spaces.

In 1993 Edward Larabee Barnes designed a church in Manhasset, New York, and in 2008 the Wisconsin firm Kubala Washatko completed a LEED Gold–certified addition to Frank Lloyd Wright's First Unitarian Society Meeting House in Madison. The congregation made as many sustainable choices as they could, while never losing sight of their church as a place for fellowship. The chairs are placed so that people make eye contact with each other. "You can see those who are feeling joy," says project architect Vince Micha, "and others who are experiencing sorrow, and the design gives the opportunity to talk to them after a service, and support them."

Sacred space, as ever, is as much about community here on earth as it is in heaven. As this uniquely American sect continues to move with the times—both social and architectural—it proves that when it comes to church, God is in the details. Not that the Unitarian Universalists are insisting that there is one.

Frank Lloyd Wright was the first modern architect to design a Universalist church. He volunteered to design a replacement for Unity Church in Oak Park, Illinois, the morning after it burned down. The result is the beloved Unity Temple.

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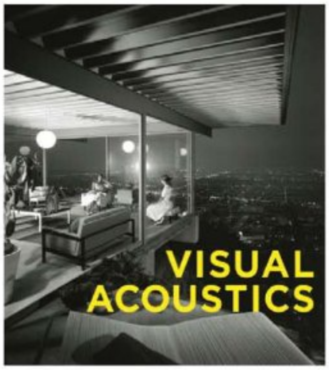

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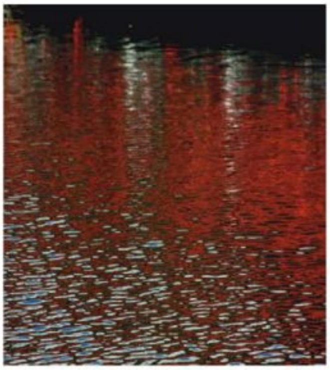

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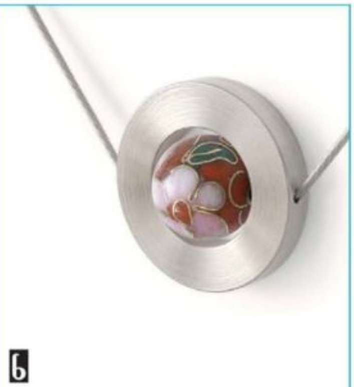

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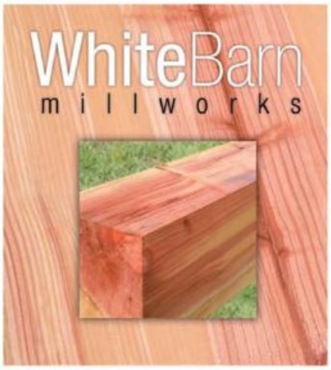

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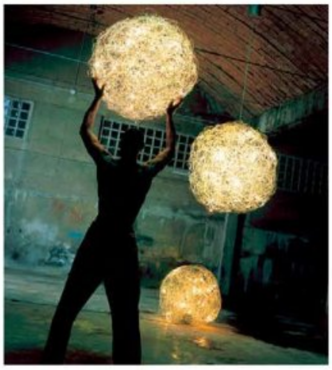

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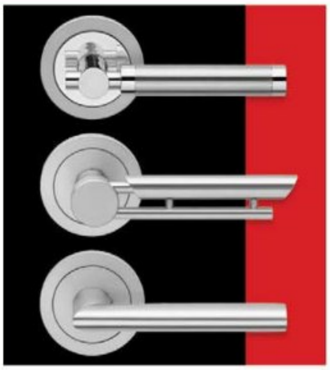

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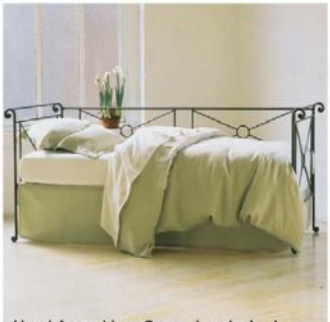

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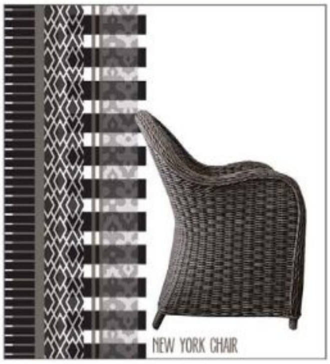

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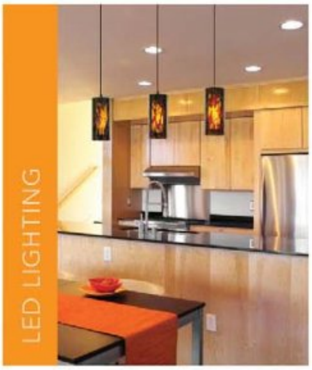

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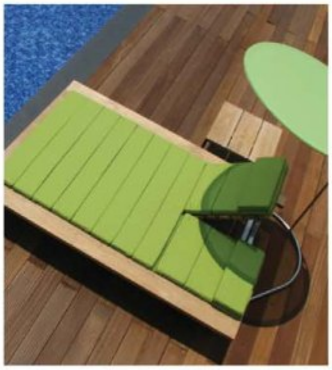

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New Video from dwell.com

Dwell editor-in-chief Sam Grawe conducts a video interview with Mike Simonian and Maaike Evers of Mike and Maaike, an experimental industrial design team located in San Francisco. With Grawe leading the conversation, the pair will share their intricately developed plans, providing an in-depth look at a concept for **atnmbl**, a driverless car, and will expound on their ideas about the future of mobility.

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The Great Basin

Long before bathing became a lavish affair supplemented with massage jets, temperature-tuned smart sensors, and glowing LED lights, the tub was precisely what it claimed to be: a place to soak, rinse, and repeat. Designer Patricia Urquiola stripped away modern excesses to bring the bath back to basics with Vieques, a no-frills basin commissioned, somewhat ironically, for a Puerto Rican luxury resort. Urquiola found her inspiration in the "rustic appeal" of the island after which the piece was named. "Two-thirds of the land is a natural reserve," she explains. "The project fits well with the spirit of the surroundings. It is a very simple object."

Trimmings are limited to a teak backrest and tray attached to the painted steel frame: Whether the tub, now available from Italian lavatory brand Agape, transcends its humble origins is one trough question. ▮

Story by Jordan Kushins

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